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THE
RUINS
OF
AVONDALE PRIORY.



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AVONDALE PRIORY,

A NOVEL,
IN THREE VOLUMES,
BY MRS. KELLY,
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VOL. III.

—“But that I am forbid
“To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
“I could a tale unfold.”

“And one did smile in death, and one cried murder.”

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THE
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OF
AVONDALE PRIORY.

CHAP. I.

“**T**HOUGH descended from English parents,” said he bowing, “owing to various circumstances, very early in life I engaged in the French King’s service, and was soon enrolled among those brave fellows, who, rejected by Britain because they wor-
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shipped God in a different form, were obliged to seek bread and patronage from a foreign power, ever inimical to their native land. I hope, in the great day of final retribution, it will never be demanded what king a Briton served, or be imputed as a crime having loved the good, the martyred Louis—I fought and conquered for him—upheld by his bounty, and distinguished by his notice, all my fortunes sunk with his throne.”

“ Previous to that calamitous event, part of our brigade being quartered in Paris, I was a constant visitor at the house of a Countess, not more celebrated for her beauty and merit, than her partiality towards the English; there I first beheld an angel girl, formed by the hand of God himself, ‘to shew mankind a finished composition;’ her beautiful figure could only be surpassed by her more beautiful mind, and though many of distinguished rank courted her alliance, she loved and lived but for the unhappy wretch before you. She was a protestant pensioner, in a convent of
Ursuline

Ursuline Nuns, and possessed a small independence;—but ours was the union of souls; we little heeded fortune, and I being ordered on a detachment to the Netherlands, in defiance, as we weakly thought of fate to disunite us, in the evening previous to my departure, the reverend father of a neighbouring convent joined our hands at the altar. I then determined the first convenient opportunity to resign my commission, and together pursue our fortunes in that happy land where we received existence, and in an hour, alas! how unpropitious to us both, we parted.”

“I had been but a short time absent when news arrived that all Paris was in commotion, that the king was dethroned, his family imprisoned, his adherents murdered, and the religious houses burned and raised to the very foundation. Alas! the horrors of a civil war! Ah! would the rash, the unthinking discontented people of every nation but once consider its baneful effects, they would be wiser,

and

“Rather bear those ills they have,

“Than fly to others that they know not of.”

A confusion of the most horrid images crowded on my soul at this intelligence—my wife, my angel, was near Paris, and in a convent!—Regardless of consequences, of life, of every thing beside herself, I flew to the loved spot where I had left her blooming, beautiful and happy. Eternal God! the horrors of that moment—even to this hour they harrow up my soul, and I forget the hand of Providence directed all for purposes wise, though as yet inscrutable — the convent was no more — nothing remained but the drear ravages of fire, and a heap of blood-stained ruins; shrieking distracted at the baleful scene, I threw my agonized frame upon the stones, and for a time lost misery in insensibility. How long I lay I know not, but on returning life I found myself supported, and gazing round, beheld an old man with looks of benignity and pity hanging over me.”

“In

"In days when France had a religion, Pere Augustine was superior of the convent, but on the revolution was driven from his peaceful solitary cell, with no other possessions than innocence of heart and sanctity of conduct, and with no other refuge than the charity of strangers — for he came unto his own, and his own received him not, acknowledged him not. Arise, young man, said he in the mildest, and most pitying voice, after having administered some reviving drops, arise, and learn from me, with all the sorrows and experience of fourscore years and ten, that earth is no abiding place; heaven never meant it for a state of bliss, and the most solid, almost only comfort in it is, that every moment gives a nearer prospect of eternal rest; and happiest they, continued the venerable old man, sighing, and happiest they who reach that rest the soonest."

"Holy father," cried I, at the time scarce heeding his pious discourse, but clinging to his garments, as if he could have given me

happiness, "Oh! holy father, tell me, tell me of the Ursulines!" "The Ursulines, my son," repeated he, the blush of tender yet bitter remembrance tinging his furrowed cheek, "alas! my son, what knowest thou of them? Full forty years and nine I was their father, and in innocence of life we trod the path of heaven together; not many evenings since the holy sisters were retired to rest, and ere the midnight bell called them to prayer, a lawless band broke in upon the quiet dwelling, they robbed the sacred shrines, destroyed our altars, and most sacreligiously they seized the modest trembling nuns."

"Our convent was reputed rich; but in vain they sought for costly treasures, ours was the treasure of sanctity and faith, and held as nothing by these cruel men, who inflamed by disappointed avarice, committed every act of violence; the old, the young, alike were victims of some ruthless unrelenting passion; the aged clinging to their altars, died amidst the burning ruins; the younger, less firm in
faith

faith, less tenacious of their vows, fled wildly from the holy mansion, and, together with some English, boarders belonging to the convent, were pursued, seized—here dark oblivion drop thy sable curtain, nor let deeds most horrible to nature ever spring to light.”

“English boarders!” repeated I, enfrezzied, when able to articulate, “Oh! reverend father, what became of them?” “Several were rescued, others escaped, only one fair daughter of thy happier land fell the sad victim of remorseless passion: Yet, she fell not unrevenged, for while the tyrant villain, like the untamed savage, gazed with glaring eyes upon his beauteous ruined prey, unseen she plunged a weapon in his barbarous heart, then fled for safety to the nearest hamlet; straight I followed the forlorn, bereft one, to calm, if possible her anguished spirit, and raise her spotless soul above the sufferings of mortality. I found her kneeling, pale, silent, and apparently serene; within her cold trembling hands she pressed a picture, her bosom heaved

with agonizing sobbs, and her soul was on the wing for purer happier regions. She looked upon me with dying sweetness, and as if she wished to speak, but all was finished, respiration near a close, she dropped the portrait, sunk, faintly uttered, "bless—him—heaven,"—and serenely expired."

"Father," cried I, in fixed and calm despair, "produce that portrait." He took it from the sleeve of his tunick, it proved my own—I had hung it on the neck of my wife when first she blessed me with her promised love. For a moment I struggled with unutterable thought—then heard—beheld no more. For many days I lay bereft of sense, and verged towards the confines of eternal repose; the pious Augustine watched my lingering hours, with a father's and a christian's care, and when returning reason dawned upon my soul, enriched me with holy counsel, and strengthened me by example more precious than the wealth of worlds; at length my mind attained a sacred calm, I held the world as
nothing,

nothing, and looked forward with heavenly transport to the moment that would release me from it, and re-unite me to my murdered angel."

"Ah! then how welcome had been the refuge of monastic peace to me! — Want, however, soon assailed me; the regiment to which I belonged, during my absence, had emigrated; I had no home, no friend, no support, but what the kindness of good Augustine provided; wearied of life, and destitute of hope, with this I could have been contented, but his own enfeebled age requiring more than charity afforded to himself, I deemed it base and pitiful for youth to trespass on that poor precarious fund, and was thinking to pursue my way to England and seek relations, when I found fate had yet another blow to strike at me."

"We inhabited the hovel in which my wife expired; to kneel, to ruminate upon the spot, made sacred by her dying presence, to

me was luxury. One morning early, before the holy man had rung the matten bell for prayer, a party of Sans Culottes appeared, and with loud imprecations demanded father Augustine: Indifferent to their intentions, with his soul as fearless of their power as superior to their cruel malice, and defended by the armour of righteousness alone, he stepped forth, and with all the benignity of innocence inquired their pleasure. All at once with fury exclaimed, 'his life or treasure.' 'Behold them both,' replied he undaunted, baring his aged bosom, and discovering his rosary and crucifix, 'behold them both.' They now grew tumultuous, and were proceeding to violence, when again he spoke, 'alas! poor men," resumed he, drawing nearer to them, "why stain immortal spirits, and pollute your hands to take a thing nature may give you in a few revolving days? I shrink appalled, not for myself, but you; be warned then, and relent, that when we meet in realms beyond this world, I may say unto my God, 'These men relented, Oh! Omnipotent reward them.'

.They

“They were regardless of the meek remonstrance, dragged his reverend form along the earth, and in a moment had numbered him with the dead, when transported beyond reason, which might have taught me how unavailing interference was, I rushed among them, and taking the venerable man in my arms, opposed their utmost fury. He prayed one moment:—‘My son,’ said he gently withdrawing himself from my embrace, ‘my son forbear, tempt not thy fate to save an aged and unhappy man—farewell—think how blest a few short moments more will make me, and that will moderate thy regret; all is at peace within, I can look down on these poor men, and say, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ The benediction of a Catholic, I know, my son, thou hast not learnt to value, but the simple blessing of an unoffending old man can never harm thee, accept it then, and fare thee well until a happier meeting, and God vouchsafe thy soul that peace at last, which now sustains my parting spirit.’ Scarce had his pious lips

finished the prayer, when several daggers were buried in his guiltless bosom, his head they severed from the body, and placing it on a pole, bore it with savage exultation towards the gates of Paris."

"Long I continued kneeling by the poor mangled remains; still I had a solemn duty to perform; I could not leave his hallowed clay a spectacle to gazing multitudes, but soon as night had veiled the world in darkness, I bore the headless body to our hovel, and having bedewed his many wounds with tears of deep regret, I prepared a grave in a small plot of ground behind the hut."

"The evening was very serene, the stars glittered in the firmament, and the moon's mild beams illumined all around; my task was solemn, well calculated to inspire an awful melancholy: The grave was made, my murdered Augustine laid on the brink, and a book of prayers trembling in my hand, when almost exhausted by my feelings and fatigue,

I sunk on my knees, but who can describe the sensations of my soul when, by a moon-beam darting into the grave I had just finished, I discovered a form in female vestments; it could be no other than my murdered, buried angel's lowly bed; circumstances, place, all confirmed it. I looked down into the cold damp grave, would have descended, and once more pressed her in my trembling arms, but, alas! pure and beauteous as she once had been, my soul was taught the humbling lesson that she was but mortal, for already had corruption seized the fairest and most faultless form, that ever graced the works of bright creation."

"Imprest with holy horror at the scene, I knelt and prayed before the opened grave: "Oh! Great Omnipotent!" I cried, "would that I might descend into this earthy bed, for 'here the wicked cease from troubling, and here the weary are at rest; would then that I could lay me down—why not?" I looked within the grave upon my wife, then on poor
Augustine

Augustine—alas! how wanted in that despairing hour! — I grasped a dagger left by the murderers, raised it to my throbbing heart—looked, and looked again—reflected—paused—shuddered—dropped it. No—I cannot, dare not move, till heaven shall give permission. *Against self murder there is a prohibition so divine, that cravens my weak hand.* Then for a time farewell, dear fainted sacrifice, and thee, my venerable murdered friend, farewell; for ever hallowed be the spot which holds the sacred dust, and though unshrouded and uncoffined, not unlamented by thy friend and husband, nor unremembered by a gracious God, who will re-unite us in a happier world.”

“Somewhat more composed I then took a last look of the beloved form with whom all hope, all happiness, were lost and buried, and wrapping the poor Augustine decently in his tunick, I laid him in my angel’s grave, and covered him with earth.”

“Slow

“Slow and lingering were my steps, and many a wishful look I cast behind, ere I could take an everlasting leave of the sad precious spot ; without heeding where I wandered, by break of day I found myself many miles from Paris, my pale melancholy countenance, and tattered habiliments were my safest passports, for giving me the forlorn appearance of a poor disordered mendicant, amid the extending commotions of that torn unhappy country, I passed unquestioned and unnoticed, and without any preconcerted plan reached Spa.”

“Sorrow and disappointment having greatly deranged my mental faculties, I was incapacitated for every employ, and sickness and want were hastening me to an early grave, when you, madam, with compassionating benevolence, raised me to all the happiness I ever can enjoy, that of serving you, and evincing gratitude for your wondrous goodness.”

Deeply

Deeply affected by the young man's interesting narrative, I was wiping the tears of innocent sympathy from my cheeks, when the Signor entered; he appeared surprised at my visible emotion, but that soon yielding to matters of more importance, in the most commanding voice and manner he ordered me never more on pain of his everlasting displeasure to admit the Compt Deuxpont. "Be calm, dear Martini," replied I, smiling, "it requires but little persuasion to enforce that command; the Compt is no favorite of mine, supposing him your friend was the only claim he ever had with me even to constrained politeness." "'Tis well," said he, something calmer, and leaving the room, "'tis well, let me find it so."

Though I inwardly thought the Signor rather capricious in his friendships, I was sincerely pleased with the Compt's dismissal, and for some days we lived in our accustomed manner. I was one evening standing in the hall, giving some orders to the cook, when I observed

observed a figure, resembling the Compt's, enter the Signor's study, which opened into the street, yet it was improbable, and I ceased to remember the idea; feeling a slight indisposition the same night, I retired soon after supper, and hastily undressing, went to bed, but was soon awoke from a quiet slumber by the rudest salute I had ever received: It was uncommon in the Signor, for his manners were gentle, I therefore felt rather offended, and repulsing the second embrace, cried "Fie, Martini, to disturb me when you know I am indisposed." No answer was returned, my light was extinguished, and an indescribable fear seizing me, I struggled violently, and screamed aloud, though unconscious why; in an instant my dressing-room burst open, and young Beauvais appeared. His eyes flashed the most indignant fire, every feature swelled with resentful passion, and his whole frame trembled with agitation; he held a light in his hand, and approaching the bed with a drawn sword, believing him mad, I shuddered for my husband's life, and as he advanced shrieked,

shrieked, "Oh! harm not my Martini!" I was unheeded, he had reached the bed, and in a generous rage exclaimed, "villain come forth, and meet the just reward of treachery." Oh! great preserver of innocence, what were my sensations on beholding in a loose undress the wretch Deuxpont in my husband's place! Fixed and motionless I lay, while the villain leaping from the bed would have escaped, but that the sword of Beauvais piercing his side brought him pale and bleeding to the ground.

At that moment Martini entered; he appeared agitated and lost in wonder, opened his lips to speak, and then, as if unknowing who to vindicate or who to criminate, again closed them, and remained speechless until Beauvais with an air of superiority I had never before seen him assume, rung the bell with violence, and, on the entrance of servants, ordered them to remove the wounded villain, and hold him in security, that, if he lived, his intended

intended crimes might meet deserved punishment.

The words, the freedom, the whole demeanour of the youth, seemed to rouse the dormant passions of Martini, and with proud scorn he demanded, who invested him with power to take such liberty in his presence.

“I claim the privilege, the freedom of a man,” replied he, reddening, “and will not see the first of women fall the victim of united baseness.” “That there is baseness among you,” interrupted Martini, glancing a furious look at me, “I am not ignorant, nor can I wonder that the pampered beggar will uphold the infamy of her that raised him, and I doubt not shares her looser pleasures.”

Suspensive agony held me mute, I gazed on each by turns, and felt a chill pervading my whole frame ; meantime Beauvaife assumed a menacing posture, yet seemed irresolute until Martini fiercely demanded if he wished
to

to assassinate another. "Stop, Sir," replied he, "nor brand me with a crime at which my honest nature would revolt; no more provoke me, for though, for one dear reason I can suffer much, still I am human, and have the passions of humanity."

"Yes, thou foul disgrace, thou mean abettor of that wanton's vileness," cried Martini, pale and almost breathless with rage, "yes, thy passion first affected my dishonor, and now she palls upon thy fancy thou contrivest guilty meetings for another."

Beauvaife could bear no more, they fiercely engaged; the blood now froze around my heart, yet my brain burned, and in perfect frenzy I leaped from the bed, as my husband was disarmed, and fell gasping at the victor's feet. I knelt beside him, took his hand, and pressed it to my cold forsaken bosom, while Beauvaife throwing the sword from him with the calmness of a forgiving heart, and the dignity

nity of a superior being, addressed the prostrate Martini.

"Live, Signor," said he, "lost and unprincipled as you are, yet live, and learn to make this kneeling angel happier; I overheard your conversation with Deuxpont this evening, and was resolved to perish or preserve her alike from a betraying husband's arts, and infamy unequalled; gratitude would have urged me, but she had yet a dearer claim on my protection; she is the daughter of my parents, and the only treasure of a wretched brother's heart: Live, then, Martini, and respect her; the blood of Nugent, though ill-fortuned, never knew disgrace; pollute not then the honest stream by treachery, nor plunge yourself in guilt too horrible to name."

What a war was within my bosom: The man I loved, my husband's baseness, my new found brother, his noble generous conduct, astonishment, love, gratitude, shame, sorrow, resentment, all, every contending passion

passion assailed me, while conscience, that uninfluenced monitor, so overwhelmed Martini, that he fainted in my arms; with my brother's assistance he was laid on the bed, where he soon recovered, but remaining obstinately silent, notwithstanding my kindest assurances and repeated endearments, I left him to the care of attendants, and retired, if possible, to lose remembrance in a few hours repose, but, alas!

“Sleep lights on lids unsullied with a tear.”

Languid and unrefreshed I arose very early and found my brother anxiously waiting in my anti-chamber to explain his expressions to Martini the preceding night; but a yet dearer claim demanding from my heart its first attention, I hastened to the chamber of my husband: He was awake, and as I approached the bed, opened his arms to receive me: Melted by his returning kindness, I threw myself on his bosom, and gave freedom to my tears: He prayed my forgiveness, kissed me, blessed me, and saying he was sensible

sible how unworthy he had been of such uncomplaining sweetness, begged I would leave him a little, as he was inclined to repose.

Ah! how easy for the cold, indifferent and uninterested, to bid the suffering faithful wife desert an erring husband; they little think, they cannot feel what secret sympathy unites them and notwithstanding errors, wrongs, and sorrows, binds affection even unto death! — Such was my condition: I believed him penitent, and his life in danger, every injury was forgotten, his tenderness alone remembered, and I at once was fond relenting, and forgiving.

Leaving him, as I hoped, to a refreshing slumber, I returned to my brother, when having mutually congratulated ourselves on our happy unexpected discovery of each other, he informed me that he had heard I was married, but never learnt to whom, and being ordered with his regiment to the West Indies immediately after, was precluded from making

king any inquiry till after his return to France, when his acquaintance with his wife, and the troubles of the country, entirely occupied him, and again retarded the much desired information.

On his resolution to emigrate, by the counsel of Pere Augustine, he had assumed the name of Beauvaife, and though he had owned to me being of English extraction, conscious he could claim the notice and protection of none, pride impelled him to still conceal his real name until, if possible, he could discover his sister, whom by some means he heard was in London, where he intended to attend the Signor and me the ensuing winter.

Such were his intentions during his sejour with us at Spa, and but for one of those casualties which often decide even the fate of nations, we might have lived unknown together for years. He was seated one evening reading, in a small room allotted to himself, when he heard Martini in earnest conversation,

versation, as he could with ease distinguish every word that was uttered; honor would have taught him to retire, but hearing the voice of Deuxpont, whose visits he knew were prohibited, and my name frequently mentioned, suspicion struck him and he resolved to stay. It seems Deuxpont was a titled sharper, to whom the ill fated Martini had lost considerable sums; by various excuses he long evaded payment, till at length the Compt became not only importunate but even threatened, and knowing what power he had acquired, presumed to acknowledge his passion for me, and that he would accept my favors instead of his money. Alas! alas! how progressive is vice! Martini, as lost to honor, as his wife to happiness, after some hesitation yielded compliance.

It was agreed that Deuxpont should be admitted to my chamber while I was asleep, and that Martini, purposely informed by an accomplice, should burst in, and with well feigned violence affect a quarrel with him,

accuse me of infidelity, and then leave Spa and me together for ever; by these means, with my heart broken, my reputation ruined, and left to the mercy of Deuxpont, it was supposed I should accept his protection, and soon yield to his criminal wishes: Bad man! he never knew the fortitude of virtue, which rises brighter, and feels greater, as the world oppresses.

After these base resolutions were taken, they were about to separate, when it occurred to the guilty coward mind of Deuxpont that I might claim the protection of relations, and he demanded who I was. "The daughter of an English exile, of the name of Nugent," replied Martini, "she had a brother in the French service, but most likely he has shared the fate of others, and can never harm you."

What then must have been the feelings of my brother!—How varied!—How distressing!—He had before determined to counteract and defeat their plot, at the risk of life,

life, but to know the premeditated villany doomed an only darling sister to destruction, shame, and misery, was insupportable, even for a moment; scarce could his impatient spirit be restrained from bursting on them like the bolt of thunder, and crushing them beneath his fury, but the image of a sister mourning a husband murdered by her brother, somewhat calmed his passions, and his resolved vengeance was reserved for Deuxpont: The denouement of that eventful evening I have already related.

When my brother had given me this explanation, conflicting agony again tore my bosom, every discovery tended but to shew me how fallen Martini was from honor, and how different to what he once had been; yet I was anxious for his life, "I loved and was a woman," could have wished oblivion's darkening curtain drawn around the whole, and I could have forgot, forgiven all. I also trembled for my new found brother's safety, and, as Deuxpont was believed in danger,

would have furnished him with money to abscond; but he was deaf to all my persuasions, and vowed to never leave me more. "Force me not from you then, my sister," cried he, "on earth you are my sole remaining blessing, in life I have no hope, in death no fear, your presence only chains me to the one, and your command to leave you would precipitate me to the other; deny not then your brother a privilege the helpless Beauvaife never would have lost."

Sensible as I was that his safety and not my own comfort had dictated the counsel, I could refuse no longer; happily there was no cause for flight, Deuxpont recovered, and dreading the detection of his various villanies, privately quitted Spa. Meantime my poor Martini verged towards the grave; the morning he obliged me to leave his apartment, on pretence of courting sleep, he had swallowed a dose, which he hoped would have closed a weary existence, ultimately, alas! it did, but first disordered his mental faculties, when ha-
bluow
ving

ving lingered a few wretched weeks, unconscious of my sorrows or my cares he expired in my arms.

Such, such, Oh! unrestrained passions, are your fatal effects! and such thy close, Oh! dissipation. For many weeks after the death of my regretted Martini, my health was in a dangerous state; hope, the last friend of the afflicted, forsook me, and but for my brother's soothing cares and attentions, I had yielded to the deepest melancholy. He would kindly sit and listen to my descriptions of former felicity, of the cheerful hours when Martini was fond and good, my Ethelinde blooming, and myself happy. "Why," said he, one evening, after having listened to all I had to say, "Why, my sister, do we not hasten to England, and in the gentle bosom of this charming Ethelinde, lose the remembrance of many evils, and renew former pleasures?"

The idea pleased me, and I soon prepared for our departure, but what a shock did I re-

ceive, when, on inspecting the papers of Martini; I found he had exhausted every fund, and that five thousand pounds of my own, which I had placed at interest for you, my Ethelinde, was my whole possessions? I breathed no complaint against the memory of my husband, no murmur escaped me, I considered he had suffered, that his life was an expiation, and prayed that his imprudencies might rest with his ashes in quietness together.

On our arrival in London, my first inquiry was at Mrs. Nelson's, for my Ethelinde; conceive my indignation, when she assured me, my child, my virtuous darling, had clandestinely eloped with a married man; I disdained reproach, and in anguish for the disappointment of not finding you, quitted her detested presence. At length I bethought me of Lord St. Clair, and hastened to his mother's house; there I learned his death, that you had resided in the family, with his sister Lady Juliet, but had left her without assigning any cause, and had never since been heard of.

Oppressed

Oppressed with repeated disappointments and accumulated sorrows, I burst into tears, and was leaving the hall, when a room-door opened, and a youth appeared; unmindful of him or any one, I was fondly repeating your name, when interrupting me, with much politeness he inquired if it was Ethelinde Martini of whom I wished to hear.

"Yes, yes," replied I, with the utmost eagerness, "and how gracious the lips that can give me tidings of her." Respectfully taking my hand, he led me to the coach in waiting, and when informed who I was, in a concise manner related your history since we parted, and concluded, saying, you was a widow, and that he had accidentally called at Lady St. Clair's, to learn the name of the late Lord's solicitor, in order to take proper means to secure the title and inheritance to the infant Earl, whom, with his sister, he had placed in safety.

CHAP. II.

I NEED not say," continued the Signora, "that my new friend was the amiable Lord Avondale: After he had arranged his business, he offered to conduct me to my Ethelinde; most joyfully I assented, yet trembled to behold my darling in her widowed state; but what language can describe my transports on beholding her in the arms of Lord St. Clair, whom I believed lost for ever in the remorseless deep: My sensations can only be conceived by my brother, who in the charming sister of Mrs. Fitzaubin found his long loved, long lamented wife, in whose imagined grave he had reposed the venerable father, Augustine."

Here

Here the Signora concluded her affecting narrative, when Marcella, at the request of her friends unfolded the mystery.

“Soon after Mr. Nugent’s departure for the Netherland’s,” said she, “the tumults in Paris commenced, and my uncle commanded my immediate return to England; I feared to disobey him, feared the surrounding perils, yet still more I feared a long, long separation from my husband, and took every possible precaution to facilitate our meeting, by not only dispatching letters to the regiment, but leaving others for him with various friends in and about Paris; those sent by post, owing to the internal commotions most probably miscarried, and most likely those intrusted to private individuals, shared a similar fate; for the gentle offices of friendship are too often neglected or forgotten at any time, and in that of public danger and general calamity most pardonable.

That I lost the portrait of my William has been a source of never ceasing disquiet since the hapless hour; yet while I deprecate the hand that deprived me of it, I drop the tear of pity and soft remembrance to the manes of her, who loved the original with unconquerable affection.

Harriet Stewart, like myself, was placed with the Ursulines for education; she visited where I did, shared my confidence, and we were the dearest friends; our intimacy introduced her to Mr. Nugent, and our frequent interviews afforded but too many opportunities of discovering his many virtues. With a modest and gentle nature she had a susceptible heart, but possessed not fortitude to resist an inclination, though she knew it wrong placed; she confessed her partiality, but after my marriage became more reserved, grew pensive and melancholy, and declared an intention to become a religious.

The

The dear resemblance of my William never left my bosom, it mixed with my morning prayers, and shared my evening contemplations; was my only solace in his absence, and guarded as the dearest treasure of my life. The morning previous to my departure I missed it, every cell, every corner of the convent was searched in vain, and though I suspected I durst not accuse, but in prophetic indignation said, as I quitted the holy dwelling, that the ungenerous detainer might yet feel as severe a loss, when conscience would inform her it was retribution. The fair unfortunate had certainly taken it from my neck while I slept, and the great voice of friendship being lost in the whirl of louder and more unruly passions, she suffered me to go without it. In sorrow and disconsolation of heart I arrived in England, yet a confidence in heaven, and a happy presentiment imprest upon my mind that I should yet behold my husband, supported me, and in the hope that some one of my letters would reach him, with

the information of my safety, I beguiled the heavy hours of absence.

My brother and sister will now perceive my reason for declining matrimony, and that my voluntary seclusion was little deserving of their encomiums, for though I should have rejoiced in any situation, to have softened their adversity, to escape from the importunity of lovers, and the commands of my uncle, certainly were prevailing motives for retirement, and how great, how blessed is the reward of my fidelity.

Here Marcella finished, and the remainder of the evening was past in the most perfect harmony; all but the beautiful Ethelinde was completely happy, but with her

“A craving void lay heavy at the heart,”

and though she listened with attention to her beloved friends, and wore the sweet appearance of serenity, still a suspensive melancholy hung over her mind, and she contemplated the future with a superstitious dread which reason could neither conquer nor account for.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

SEVERAL days now passed in perfect tranquillity at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Fitzaubin; Marcella was blest with her Nugent, Lady Juliet happy in hope and the soft attentions of Lord Avondale, the Signora rejoicing in the promising prospects of her adopted child, and even Ethelinde herself by the cheering efforts of attached friends, and the tender letters of St. Clair, felt her spirits enlivened, and began to indulge brighter hopes of future felicity. Such was the condition of Mr. Fitzaubin's little household, when a letter arrived from Lord St. Clair, requesting the immediate presence of Lord Avondale in London, on a matter of importance; the

the mandate was instantly obeyed, he set out the same evening.

It was now that poor Lady Juliet felt chagrin and the langour of absence, while Ethelinde smiling, told her, she found how much easier it was to offer counsel than to follow it.

The weather was now beautifully clear, fine and frosty, and a few days after the departure of Lord Avondale, when each was pursuing the amusement of the hour, Ethelinde resolved to walk to Basil's cottage, and inquire for the health of Mrs. Harrop. The Signora was rather indisposed, and Lady Juliet engaged writing, she therefore set out alone, but had proceeded little more than a mile, when she met a servant, who presented her a letter; the hand writing was Lord St. Clair's; she tore it open, and read the following words. "I am, my life, this moment arrived, hasten to the castle, bring Juliet if you please, but on no account delay one instant."

Your's only, my beloved for ever,

St. Clair."

The paper trembled in the hand of Ethelinde, her heart fluttered with the pleasure of expectation, and joy dilated her whole frame, she wished to return for Lady Juliet, but love, impatience, her Athwold's desire not to delay, all urged her to proceed, she therefore dispatched the servant for her sister, and hastened to the castle alone.

"Thank heaven, my forebodings cease," said she softly, as with quick steps she pursued her way, "thank heaven, my forebodings cease, my Athwold is returned, and sorrow is no more." On approaching the gates she beheld Mrs. Harrop, standing under the vestibule, and leaning on the arm of Basil Carr. "How are you?" said Ethelinde, in a compassionate voice to her, but before she could answer, Basil, with an indefinable look exclaimed, "Why are you here Miss?" and then as if replying to some request of his mother's added, "indeed I can't, I will never look upon the witch again, fare you well," and swift as lightning left her. At any other time

Basil's manner had created surprise, and even curiosity, but now the fond idea of meeting St. Clair absorbed every other. On the gates being opened, she however felt a degree of wonder that the servant, instead of attending her to the grand entrance, turned towards the most remote turret of the castle, which hung in heavy grandeur over the surrounding moat; Mrs. Harrop, leaning on her staff, followed; her slow pace and altered figure engaged Ethelinde's notice; her eyes were sunk, her lips pale and quivering, and every feature impressed with ghastly horror, while her limbs with difficulty supported her agitated frame.

Pity glowed within the bosom of Ethelinde; she considered, gratefully remembered, that her roof had sheltered her, and again with kindness she inquired how she did. A heavy groan burst from the old woman's breast, tears rolled down her furrowed cheeks, and trembling with emotion she replied, "I have been very bad, bad indeed, am sore smitten, will you do me good?" added she mournfully.

"Most

"Most willingly," said Ethelinde, and was about to ask how, when Lady Glenroy, with quick steps advanced towards them. Ethelinde had never seen her Ladyship, but from various descriptions of her person, and a certain haughtiness of manner, she knew it to be her: On a nearer approach she looked in the face of Mrs. Harrop, with inquisitive earnestness, then in Ethelinde's, appeared in painful confusion, and with an agitation visibly suppressed, said, "I can hear your requests, Mrs. Harrop, presently; and now, Miss Barry, I shall have the honor to conduct you to Lord St. Clair."

They walked together almost round the edifice, still no domestic was to be seen—all was silent, hushed as the solemn midnight hour, and to a mind less innocent and unsuspecting than Ethelinde's, there was an air of mystery, sufficient to cause alarm, but unconscious of offence, and incapable of giving it, with a heart beating high with expectation, love, and pleasure, she followed her Ladyship

to

to a blackened turret in the northern wing of the castle. The entrance was spacious, dark and gloomy; a winding staircase led to subterranean passages; the walls were rugged and damp, and seemed to freeze her blood by their petrifying chill.

An indescribable fear now seized her, she wished to retreat, but it was impossible without betraying terror, so with trembling steps she ascended the turret. The apartment to which she was conducted was cold and cheerless, furnished in a Gothic stile, and hung round with tapestry. "Where, Madam, is my Lord?" said she in a tremulous voice, while her Ladyship closed the door, where is my Lord? I thought to find him here." The countenance of Lady Glenroy varied, alternately from red to pale, she looked earnestly in Ethelinde's face, and appeared to ruminate, and at length in a low irresolute voice replied, "Most probably, Ethelinde, (I think they say your name is Ethelinde) most probably then, I say, you and St. Clair will rest this night together." She then traversed the room.

room several times, gazed again, and hastily quitting her presence, strongly barricadoed the door, with ponderous bolts outside.

"Spirits of mercy!" cried Ethelinde, shuddering as she sunk in a chair, "spirits of mercy, what a destiny is mine! Is my destruction necessary to the peace of more? yet why this secret dread, this suspensive horror; I have no Lady St. Clair, no Bothwel—yet, yet the eyes of Lady Glenroy had a fearful meaning. St. Clair and I may enjoy rest this night together!" portentous, mystic words, whither go ye? rest with my Athwold!—but how or where—No matter, Ethelinde with Athwold must be happy."

In unconnected sentences, and ideas all equally incoherent, she passed a considerable time; still no one appeared, to explain the mystery of her situation, not a murmur reached her ear; all within the castle was quiet, silent as the midnight hour, yet it was a saddened silence, conveying nameless horror. Meantime the glimmering embers of the fire were

were fast expiring, and evening commencing her sable reign, yet it was not dark, for the misty beams of a wintery moon gleamed thro' the Gothic casements of the turret, at once diffusing a fearful paleness over every object, and discovering the fleet battering the antique walls which inclosed her, the wind blew very bleak, and sounded shrilly through the apertures of the building, while the louder blasts shook the ghastly apartment, and even agitated the arras hanging around. The blood of Ethelinde felt freezing within her veins, her ideas were sad, and wandered far beyond the bounds of probability, torturing images succeeded, and in a whirl of gloomy predictive agony she threw her suffering frame upon the floor, and interrupted by many sobs and tears respired a prayer to the great preserver of oppressed innocence.

How long she lay in her prostrate condition is uncertain; perhaps her exhausted spirits had yielded to a momentary slumber, for she was insensibly roused by the sound of heavy foot-

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steps ascending the turret stair; much as she wished the approach of something human to explain her situation, her soul died within her as the steps drew near, and if possible she would have shrunk into the ground on which she reclined, rather than have encountered the unknown visitor.

Without rising she had insensibly moved to a remote corner of the room, as if to shun her impending fate, when she heard the bolts drawn back, every sense was suspended on torturing expectation, and she had raised her trembling hands and lovely eyes to heaven, when the door burst open, and the figure of a man entered; his face was concealed under a mask, several spots of blood appeared upon his garments, and in either hand he held a dagger and a light.

Ethelinde became immoveable, she had a confused remembrance of his person, yet could not name him. He advanced close to her, placed his light and dagger on a chair,
and

and rudely seizing her in his arms, passionately pressed her to his bosom: The blushes of virtuous indignation suffused her cheeks, and inspired with a momentary flash of spirit she violently repulsed the daring freedom, struggled, and in that struggle the man's mask fell off. Had the yawning gulph, with all its infernal horrors gaped before her, she had been less appalled than when in the man she discovered the detested countenance of the fiend like Bothwel.

A cold dew resembling that of death overspread her pallid brow, her sight grew dim, her hands fell powerless, and her heart almost forgot to beat; she could conceive no thought, respire no prayer, yet her anguished spirit was not hidden from the eternal Father of Light. The abhorred word "Bothwel!" in a low voice, replete with horror, at length escaped her quivering lips. "Yes, Bothwel," repeated he, straining her with savage triumph to his breast, "yes, proud woman, Bothwel; once again you gasp beneath his
power,

power, see now who can release you." Every sense was fast receding from Ethelinde, as in accents feeble as the lowest whisper she replied to his threat, "Heaven." "I bid a bold defiance to its utmost power," exclaimed the impious wretch, "within one hour you die, but first shall gratify impetuous wishes, rendered more fierce by lingering delay."

Ethelinde raised her modest eyes upon him, and strengthened by a power above him, restrained his hand, while in accents soft, yet solemn, she addressed him. "Poor Bothwel, yet bethink thee," said she, "bethink thee, ere too late, yield not to passions kindled by bad spirits to undo thee, nor plunge in perdition so very deep and black that mercy cannot reach thee; the everlasting ages will commence, eternity begin, and still roll on, and torture, never-ceasing torture, gnaw thee ever, ever more; for learn that I am, Athwold's wife, and Athwold is thy brother." — "Futile weak pretence," interrupted the ruthless monster, "let it frighten fools, I am
no

no brother, own no brother, nor can your utmost art avail you now."

Here he ceased to speak, and proceeded to indecent freedom; she felt her fortitude revive, the spirit of virtue nerved her arm, and by a sudden spring she spurned the villain several paces from her. "Hence, fiend," she cried, "still more abhorred than feared, hence, nor pollute me with thine envenomed touch; multiplied and bitter as are my sufferings, pure as thou art vile, I'll reach that heaven which thou canst never enter; take thy dagger, speed it home, but shudder while thou strikest, for the vengeance of St. Clair, and the justice of a God will fall with heaviness on thine accursed head."

The soul of Bothwel was shook by passions black and impetuous as the howling midnight storm, all hell was warring in his bosom while she spoke, and his eyes glared fiercely round; fury, revenge, and that abhorred passion which relenteth not, sat scowling on his heavy brows,

brows, and with lips quivering and livid he cried, "By that God, if such a being reigns indeed, not two hours since I crushed your Athwold to the dust; this arm, this dagger, reached his heart, behold, his blood still reeks upon my hands, hands willingly employed to send your soul to seek him."

The wretched Ethelinde retained sensibility, but transfixed to the spot with horror unutterable, appeared the pale image of despair. "This dagger reached his heart," were the last words she could hear, all was centered in them, her angel soul was on the wing to heaven, and it had fled serenely, without a parting pang, but that Bothwel again approached her. Bothwel was her fate, her doom, the very delegate of treachery and ruin; he had a deed to perpetrate, and that deed was death; he had a passion to gratify, and that passion was destruction to the helpless betrayed Ethelinde. Again then he advanced, and grasped her now passive hands; she was cold, silent, and almost lifeless, and

though her beautiful figure was more suited to the heavenly contemplation of some celestial being, than the ruthless desire of a polluted demon, he had sacrilegiously ravaged the fair mansion of angelic purity, but that a strange confused noise approaching made him start, and for a moment retarded his purpose.

“What dare, what can impede me now?” said he, yet his guilty spirit shrunk as the sounds grew louder and more near, “what can impede me now; St. Clair lies cold and weltering in his blood, Avondale far from hence, and —” Here a voice alarmed him, he listened, shuddered—What could it mean?—It was not fancy, nor yet the terror of an accusing conscience, for soon the tapestry was seen to shake with violence, a heavy crash was heard, and in an instant the figure of the murdered Athwold stood armed before him: Excess of fear and horror held the wretch immovable; his sight seemed blasted, and every breath was a convulsive gasp: The figure gazed with more than mortal indignation, and
impressed

impressed the murderer with more than mortal agony, at length the spectre spake. "Murderer of the human kind," it said in awful sounds, which seemed to shake the vaulted roof, "murderer, thy race is run, this night concludes a life of dreadful guilt, and sends thy blackened soul upon a world of spirits:— Oh! fiend—fiend—fiend—prepare thee!"

A terrific horror overwhelmed the heart of Bothwel, his eyes glared, his teeth gnashed, agony shook him to desperation, and uttering a groan of torture, he seized the dagger, and plunged it in his own treacherous bosom. A ghastly paleness soon shaded his distorted features, and while writhing in the last agonies of parting nature, he fixed a dismal look upon the figure of St. Clair, and in hollow unconnected accents addressed it.

"Gracious spirit of a murdered brother, Oh! say in mercy, ere I sink for ever, doth a God exist?" "Lost being, yes!—A great, a just, an avenging God—" Bothwel heard

no more, he sunk back, the bands of life burst asunder, and with one fearful despairing groan he expired.

Ethelinde still continued speechless and immoveable, and the figure of St. Clair to gaze in silent dejection, till the most lamentable shrieks and groans were heard resounding through the castle; they must have been terrific, for they struck even the ear of Ethelinde, and rousing her deadened faculties, she started agonized from the ground, and flew towards the door; it was slightly fastened, she forced it open, and darting down the turret stair, with the wild celerity of a maniac, burst from confinement, ran through the different avenues of the castle; all appeared anarchy and confusion; the din of bells, human groans, clashing doors, and strangers and domestics passing and repassing along the different galleries, formed a noise at once complicated, fearful, and tremendous.

Ethelinde

Ethelinde was regardless of all she either saw or heard, her ideas were very confused, and her recollection imperfect of the incidents of the few preceding hours. She continued to range about with the same degree of wildness, gazing on every one she met as if she wished to learn a something but imperfectly known, until she reached the grand hall of the castle; there she received the fatal portion of sense which told her she was doomed to wretchedness; the scene was still more dreadful than the one she had quitted; a moment she stood aghast, the extremest point of mortal agony struck her heart, she looked, looked again, the view was maddening; she shrunk back in horror, gasped, staggered, and shrieking, "My murdered husband!" fell into alarming insensibility.

Alas! what wonder? On a bier lay the mangled body of a youth, the hand of murder had deformed each feature, his garments were drenched in blood, and in his bosom appeared a gaping wound, from which the

vital stream had issued: Near the still regarded clay Lady Juliet knelt, in all the dignity of silent grief; as Ethelinde fell lifeless, she moved not, but looked as if to say, "How happy!" In another part of the hall appeared Lady Glenroy, held by her servants, and struggling in the most terrible convulsions; old Mrs. Harrop, supported by her daughter and Basil Carr, stood in a remote corner, tears fell in torrents from her aged eyes, and every furrowed feature wore the impressions of internal horror, anguish, and despair, while her poor quivering lips incessantly lamented having murdered her own darling, her departed Margaret.

The inhabitants of Mr. Fitzaubin's mansion were also present, and with several strangers and domestics seemed helpless and bewildered, in the dreadful confusion of the hour. The Signora would have raised the fainting Ethelinde in her arms, but exhausted by varied anguish was unable, so lay and wept beside her, till by the assistance of Nugent and

Fitzaubin she was supported to bed. Lady Glenroy was soon after forced from the hall by her servants, for none else seemed very anxious for her safety, or interested in her fate. Something like order then ensued, all were dispersed and properly attended, when the horrid din was hushed in gloomy silence.

CHAP. IV.

THE friends of Ethelinde began to entertain the most serious apprehensions that the gentle spirit was fled to happier regions, for several hours elapsed before she discovered the faintest symptoms of returning sensibility; when she did, most happily her mind retained very imperfect traces of all that

had happened, for she remembered them only as the passing vision of an uneasy dream, and with much anxiousness inquired of her attending friends, where she had really been, and what had reduced her to such excessive weakness. "Pray tell me," added she, with a sad sweetness, "pray tell me, for my dreams have been so very mournful—Methought I was betrayed, my Athwold dead, and that Bothwel told me he had murdered him; but surely that could never be, or my poor heart had never beat again." She looked round, and beheld the tear of sympathy trembling in every eye, and the sigh of regret agitating every bosom; some turned away to conceal their emotion, all were silent, and she was yielding to the most distracting fears, when, with looks of comfort, peace, and sweet complacency, the worthy Mr. Menville approached her.

"Be composed my child," said he, in the softened accent of some benignant angel, commissioned to give consolation, and pres-

sing

sing her kindly to his bosom, he continued, "there is, my Ethelinde, a chequered history to disclose, in which you are much concerned and bear a principal part, and in a state so subject to the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow as that of mortality, it can little be wondered, that in the incidents to be related there is much to exult in, and something to lament."

“Very early in life I was left an orphan, with two sisters; the youngest famed as much for beauty as distinguished by every gentle and feminine virtue; at the age of sixteen a happy chance, or rather let me call it a guardian Providence introduced her to the late Earl of Avondale; they loved and wedded, and for several years enjoyed a life of the purest domestic harmony, of happiness, too exquisite to last on earth. The death of an only daughter, and soon after that of Lord Avondale, destroyed the fair fabric of her innocent joys, and taught her humbled heart, that the righteous spirit must seek in better worlds for permanent felicity. Too soon, alas! for my

happiness and prospects, she followed those she loved; I was still very young, but Providence, ever gracious, raised me friends, and led me up to man."

"Before I went the tour of Europe with Lord St. Clair, I resolved to visit Avondale, and offer the tribute of a tear at the grave of a sister who had been a mother to me, but I found the castle deserted by the family on whom it had devolved, and all around it wearing the appearance of desolation and ruin. Strange and improbable stories were also circulated; some, that Lady Avondale was still living, and immured in the subterranean caverns belonging to the castle; others, that her spirit was unquiet, and could never find repose until some dreadful secrets were disclosed, for which purpose she had been frequently seen in the Priory Ruins, the Castle, and even in the gardens and forest, but none having had sufficient courage to question the spectre, the mystery still remained undeveloped."

"These

"These legends I treated as the offspring of ignorance and superstition, and endeavoured to prove their improbability to some attached domestics of my sister's, who, notwithstanding the cheerless solitude of the castle, made it their constant residence."

"With a heavy heart I then quitted Avondale as I thought for ever; the intermediate circumstances from that period until Lord St. Clair's late journey to London, you are more perfectly acquainted with than I, and it only remains to relate what has since occurred."

"I was at the Rectory of Arundle when his Lordship arrived with his mother's corpse, and when every decent duty was performed to the dead, at his request I attended him to the Metropolis, as well to publicly announce his union, and authenticate his infant's births, as to assist him in arranging his affairs. Upon inspecting Lady St. Clair's papers, with grief and consternation he found a written confession, that the vile Bothwell was her own son;

by a too highly favored dependant, previous to her nuptials with his noble father; ambition had alone led her to the generous bosom of Lord St. Clair, who little suspecting her villainess and perfidy, because it gave her pleasure, received and cherished the boy as the son of a deceased friend, for which she passed him."

"The guilt of Lady St. Clair little shocked or surprised her son, she had partly confessed it, though at the time he believed it the ravings of a disturbed imagination, and he had known her capable of yet deeper and more unpardonable enormity; but that Bothwel, so disgraced by every horrid crime, should be related, should have a claim, was insupportable, and if possible to obliterate the painful humiliating reflection, I proposed his immediate departure, for the endearing society of his gentle Ethelinde. All was arranged, and the travelling carriage in waiting, when a youth, adorned with every manly beauty, was introduced; sweet sensations indescribable fluttered

fluttered in my breast, and though unconscious why, I could have clasped the blooming figure in my arms; the mystery of my feelings was still more inexplicable when I learned he was Lord Avondale, for he bore a manly resemblance to my charming sister."

"I was contemplating the very extraordinary unaccountable likeness, when he took the hand of Lord St. Clair, saying at the same time, with a friendly smile, "You see I have lost no time in obeying your commands." "My commands, Avondale!" repeated Lord St. Clair astonished: "Your's," said he, producing a letter. The paper shook in your husband's hand, his colour changed, and in half frantic accents he exclaimed, "Some black design is forming, that villain Bothwell is the writer."

No time was to be lost, we had the most horrid fears, yet all remained silent, and swift as horses could bear us, without one moment's delay or any impediment, we pursued
our

our journey till within about fifty miles of Avondale, when driving furiously down a very steep declivity, the fore wheel of our chaise came off, and we were overturned; fortunately a few bruises were our only personal injury, but greater were to be dreaded, for we were many miles from a post town, and no Smith could be procured in the adjacent village, to repair the damage which the carriage had sustained. This village was miserable in the extreme, a few wretched half-ruined cottages, with an humble ivy covered church, which scarce could boast a steeple, and a romantic parsonage house, which rose in lowly solitary neatness behind, upon the bank of a winding river, were all its conveniences and all its embellishments."

"The setting sun was obscured by heavy clouds, and the cold shrill northern blasts portended a stormy evening, when Lord St. Clair having, with an impatience we were all too sensible circumstances required, dispatched the postillion for a smith and materials to re-

pair

pair our carriage, we inquired for an Inn; no accommodation of the kind was to be found, nor could we meet with that untutored hospitality, which often the poorest, and even the rudest will cheerfully offer to the benighted stranger, for every cottager closed his door, as if apprehensive we should claim the shelter of his roof, and we were betaking ourselves to the refuge of an old barn, near the church yard, when a rustic approached us, saying, he was servant to his Reverence the young curate, and dared to say if we would follow him we should want for nothing the parsonage-house afforded. The evening was now become very tempestuous, the offer was too good to be rejected in our condition, and with many thanks we followed the peasant to the Curate's modest dwelling. He introduced us with no other ceremony, than simply relating our disaster, when an elderly gentleman received us with that complacent frankness, which plainly said, a kindly and benevolent heart gave the welcome. If we were pleased with our reception, we were certainly

certainly more at our ease, when in this gentlewoman Lord Avondale recognized Mrs. Barlowe, his own favorite housekeeper, who, for reasons only known to herself, beseeched permission to leave the Castle during Lady Glenroy's visit."

"We had scarcely seated ourselves to enjoy the kindly warmth of a cheerful fire, when the room-door opened, and a young man, with a figure more prepossessing than even elegant, made his appearance; the sable neatness of his attire and the modesty of his manner announced him of the church, and we were about to return him the compliments of salutation, when a general astonishment took possession of us all, and held us silent as statues. In form, in feature, and in voice, he bore a perfect resemblance of the late Lord Avondale.

"Eternal Providence!" exclaimed I, gazing on the youth, while many a remembered pleasure and strange idea filled my breast,

"Eternal

"Eternal Providence, who, or what do I behold? Dear image of a long-lost, ever loved brother, to whom do you belong?" The young man with much humility cast a pitying yet kind respectful glance on Mrs. Barlowe, and would have silently retired, but she stopped him. "Stay, dear Edmund," said she, holding out to him her trembling hand, while blushes suffused a face which still could boast the interesting remains of beauty, "Stay, and in the full confession of a long afflicted heart, learn the particulars of a history, even to you but little known, and hitherto imperfectly related."

"Though indignation may swell the hearts and embitter the tongues of my unerring auditors, I will bend, and with humility receive their reprehension, hoping this unoffending youth may meet with kindness, and be cherished for a father's sake, when my long sorrowing heart shall cease to beat for ever. It was my fortune to be nourished at the same bosom with the late Lord Avondale; my
mother's.

mother's appearance pleased the Countess, but she could not be persuaded to part with me, her first-born darling, which inducing his illustrious parents to receive us both into the family, I and his Lordship were cherished and grew together. I ever was a favorite with her Ladyship; she vouchsafed to answer for me at the font, and on the decease of my parents, protected me with the kindness of a mother; how fatal to my every future hour! how destructive to my peace, was the dear woman's dissolution! She expired the very day I had attained my fourteenth year, leaving me with dangerous sentiments growing in my artless breast, without one gentle hand to guide my inexperienced youth, or warn me from the sad illusions of insinuating pleasures."

"Too soon the amiable young Lord distinguished his pretty sister, (as he named me) by every soft testimony of guileless affection; it was so sweet, so pleasing to my enraptured fancy, that as unknowing what I did, as he was unconscious of wrong, we cherished it
with

with mutual warmth and kindness, till my peace and innocence were lost for ever!"

"Yet fear not, Oh! virtue, to drop a tear for my undoing; fear not, Oh! honor, to breathe a sigh for the gentle Avondale! — Nature, erring nature, was our fatal guide; she led us to the brink of smiling ruin, where we sunk before our danger was suspected."

"The bosom of the generous Avondale throbbed with regret and anguish as I wept my fall from innocence, and on peculiar complaints indicating pregnancy, forgetful of his noble birth and expectations he would have rescued me from shame, and honored me with his hand, but my love was disinterested as unhappy; humble as I had been from my parents lowly state, I was by folly and ill-fortuned love become more abject still, yet I resolved to rise in something, and refused that blessing, which, if great and good, I would have given worlds to possess."

"His

“His Lordship being the last surviving male of the illustrious house, at a very early age his father consented to let him wed where virtuous love and honor pointed: Charming Antonia! how pure, how chaste the flame, which glowed within thy spotless bosom! how sweet, serene, exulting, were thy feelings, when pressing a loved infant in thy guiltless arms! How different to mine, who could only bedew the smiling face with tears of bitterness and shame. The hapless youth who now stands blushing here for a poor mother’s error is that child; — the living, yet beloved proof of my dishonor, and Lord Avondale’s imprudence.”

“I would have quitted the castle on his marriage, but he prevented my intention, and to my unutterable confusion and surprise, introduced me, my sad, sad story, and my infant son, to his all faultless wife: Her’s was that pure, that perfect virtue, which needed not to borrow either consequence or lustre from another’s failings, or contrasted error;

as I sunk almost insensible and speechless at her feet, she raised me with pitying complacency, and with sweet persuasion in her smiling eyes, endeavoured to sooth me to some degree of confidence and composure. "Do not fear me, Mary," said she, in the kindest voice, "I will be the mother of your boy, and the friend of yourself; I can commiserate the errors of sensibility, sigh for the soft temptations to which untaught innocence is exposed, and must love the heart not insensible to my Avondale's perfection."

"Though more animated with a respectful and admiring love, than depressed by fear, I could only offer some confused acknowledgments for her unexampled goodness, till her continued affability and sweetness removed every uneasy idea in her presence, banished my diffidence, and filled my grateful bosom with reverence and love. My little Edmund was placed with a careful nurse, at her Ladyship's expence, my secret was buried in her own breast, and though I was retained at the castle

castle as her personal attendant, she honored me with unlimited confidence, and treated me with the kind ease of a familiar friend. No uneasy jealousy, no unkind suspicion ever found admission in her gentle heart; she would leave me with her Lord for hours alone, and in any little indisposition which attacked him, when engaged herself, would depute me to attend in his chamber."

"Do not hesitate, my Mary," said she, one morning, perceiving me look surprised at the command, "of suspicion my nature is incapable, it is harsh accusation, because without proof, and never shall your already wounded heart be insulted by it." Ah! would the jealous wife, the suspecting husband, but once consider, that a generous confidence is the best security, the surest claim, on a mind possessing the faintest spark of honor, so many pillows would not be strewed with thorns of anguish and discontent, nor families exposed to the derision of an unfeeling world. Or I should have shuddered at the bare idea of deception,

ception, and rather perished than have wronged her."

"For two years we lived in uninterrupted harmony and smiling peace; the castle was the mansion of content; no care approached us, nor no fear disturbed us, each day was happy, and each night serene. But I need not here expatiate on the virtues which adorned his Lordship and his lovely wife; even when the stupendous walls of Avondale are reduced to dust, and the proud turrets lie low a Gothic ruin, their worth shall be remembered, and generations yet unborn proclaim their praise. They were indeed, "*the grace of all the country round*," the comfort of the afflicted, and support of the poor; and there were joyful hopes they would have reared a numerous offspring to transmit their goodness, for already her Ladyship was advancing in her second pregnancy, when it appeared wife in the sight of him who views futurity with a glance, to recall the sweet spirit of the infant Elvina to its native heaven."

"The

“The parent who had mourned a breathless darling, can only conceive the father’s pang and mother’s anguish on the sad occasion; yet as their piety was elevated and pure, devotion mingled with their grief, which yielding to resignation, in a short time their meek spirits were restored to tranquillity, though not their accustomed cheerfulness.”

CHAP. V.

LADY Avondale was now within a very few weeks of her accouchment; more than the ordinary langour of her situation seemed to overwhelm her, and one evening that she felt increasing indisposition, attended only by myself she retired at a very early hour.

"I think, Mary," said she, after having sat in a dejected posture for some time, "I think, and the idea strengthens in my mind, and gains encouragement from a predictive despondency, unconquerable, that I shall never give an heir to my beloved Avondale, that I shall never hear a lisping babe bless me with the name of mother, but soon be—as if I had never been." "Would, Madam," repeated I, interrupting her, with rather more kindness than respect, "would that your Ladyship was less ingenious in the art of tormenting yourself; why is a mind so enlightened, and an understanding so just, to yield to a weakness, which certainly, if indulged, will not only impeach your judgment, but even tend to disappoint the darling wish of your united hearts? Is the health and vivacity of blooming eighteen years, that hath already given a little blessing, fainted indeed alas! too soon, and about to give a second, I hope to longer cheer its parents, and adorn the world. Is this a season for depression and despair? Dearest Lady be yourself." "Cease, kind Mary,"

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Mary," said the charming woman, her face pale and a tear trembling in her languid eye, "cease, reason is subdued, hope fled, and for a time the powers of superstition hold dominion; my waking thoughts, my sleeping fancy, all are impressed with the same sad presage; never can a restless slumber seal my eyelids, even for a moment, but the most dreary oraisons rise—listen to that so late as yesternight. Methought I stood in our old Gothic hall, viewing the portraits of my dear Lord's warlike ancestors, when suddenly a more than common darkness fell around, and tempest shook the battlements; I turned towards the casements, and through the gloomy painted chrystal could perceive the horizon so bright before, obscured by black and awful clouds; the sun grew dim and disappeared; a howling wind blew fearful, and soon a peal of thunder most tremendous shook this ancient edifice as if it would have laid it and its Gothic honors in the dust. A trembling horror (never known in slumbers I should hope before) alarmed my bosom, and I was about to seek

seek a softer refuge from my dreadful fears, when an awful flash of lightning descended, quivering at my feet, and a form arose before me; something within told me it was one of those bad spirits that rack the evil mind, and tempt the good."

"I come, said the terrific being, "I come to disclose the secrets of eternity, and unfold thy fate." I shuddered, for the countenance was malign, as the words were portentous and mysterious. "Fair daughter of mortality," resumed the baneful spectre, "what avails love of earthly beings? What avails thy wondrous worth, and what the favoring grace of mighty heaven? Even now the fates prepare a work of woe, and aid a deed most horrible; husband's blood will stain these antique walls, a widow's tears soon fade thy blooming cheeks, and never shall a man of thee be born to heir these vast domains."

"Here ceased the dread prediction, and here the phantom sunk, and in a moment after

a blaze of pure effulgent light illumined all around, and a female form, more beauteous than the fairest daughters of the earth descended; a fond sensation throbbing in my breast proclaimed the heavenly messenger my departed mother. "Fear not, Antonia," said the glorious spirit, "fear not, goodness is ever safe, even now the morn of thy felicity is dawning, no hours of anguish for a husband's loss thy heart shall feel, and the domains of Avondale by Avondale shall be heired, till latest ages in eternity are lost." The fair apparition then disappeared, and I awoke trembling and cold with horror, yet mentioned not my anguished feelings to my Lord. The heavenly vision had somewhat soothed, but had not cheered my spirits, for the words were mystic, far beyond my finite comprehension, and the remembrance inspires a secret unknown dread of imagined evils."

"While Lady Avondale was speaking, my blood felt as if congealing within my veins, and though I endeavoured to inspire her with cheerful

cheerful ideas, an inexplicable gloomy terror overwhelmed myself, and with confusion (I fear too visible) I made an excuse to quit her presence. Next morning she was so ill and depressed, as to be utterly unable to pay her accustomed visit to a school she had founded on the borders of the forest; she therefore commissioned me to execute her commands, and distribute the promised rewards among the children."

"Unattended and alone I sat out, and as my poor Edmund's nurse resided only a mile distant, conceiving her Ladyship's confinement would entirely engage me for a month, at least, I resolved to snatch a hasty kiss of my darling before I returned. Having, therefore dispatched my business at the school, I fondled him several hours when recollecting the dinner hour would be past, I bade him hastily adieu, and turned my steps towards the castle. The season was now dreary, winter had commenced her gloomy reign, the leafless trees were shook by the bleak No-

vember blasts, and low heavy clouds portended a tempestuous night, as I approached the Gothic walls of Avondale Castle. Good heaven! how prone to superstition is the melancholy mind; as I past through the cypress grove the night owl shrieked, I thought it fearful—a bat fluttered at my ear, I deemed it ominous of evil—and even the hollow murmurs of the wind I imagined conveyed a sad predictive sound.”

“As I drew near the gates, I was astonished to perceive them open, and no warder attending; a moment I stood, cold with suspensive dread, under the outer portico; the castle seemed deserted, not a domestic was to be seen:—What I felt was indescribable.—With slow tottering steps I advanced towards the grand entrance, but even there the portals were unguarded, and gloom and desolation appeared to have taken possession of the splendid hall, where happiness and hilarity had so lately presided. With unusual trepidation, a heart forboding nothing less than good, and
almost

almost unconscious whither my steps were directed, I ascended a staircase which led to a suit of apartments occupied more particularly by his Lordship, and in an anti-chamber beheld a scene which had well nigh stopped the feeble springs of life for ever."

"Extended on a couch lay the beloved Lord Avondale, and every lineament of his beauteous manly countenance bearing the pale impressions of approaching death. It seems he had been mounted on a high spirited horse, and eager to be foremost in the hunt, had attempted a dangerous leap, which proved fatal, and he was carried home, in the last agonies of parting nature. Unhappily the sad catastrophe had reached the ear of his wife, she flew wildly to the gates, and met the attendants bearing his bleeding body, and as I entered the apartment, she had been supported insensible from it, attended by Lady Glenroy, who was then on a visit to the castle."

“What a blessing had insensibility been to me in these despairing moments! But I retained the use of every reasoning faculty, and felt the full extent of all my various agonies. In fixed, yet calm despair, I drew near to where the worshipped being, dearest to my soul, was fast expiring; his face was wan, his hands were cold, and death might then have almost claimed him as his own: Yet, still he lived, though, alas! the eyes which were never raised but with benignity and peace on all, were dull, and nearly closing in eternal darkness; the arm never extended but to relieve the feeble and unhappy, hung lifeless by his side; and the warm gentle heart which beat with generous love and pity to all the human kind, the icy hand of remorseless death was chilling now for ever.”

“Blessed Avondale,” I cried, but could no more, for he cast upon me one pitying dying look, sighed, “Poor Mary—Oh! my Antonia!” and resigned his gracious spirit. — Sure the sigh which bore his spotless soul to regions

regions of eternal bliss gave mine a pang surpassing that of death. Aghast with agony immovable I stood, and gazed upon the pale, pale corpse before me. "Worshipped of thy Mary's heart," cried I, unmindful of the servants, who, though almost stupified with grief, yet wondered at my exclamations, and believed them arising from a temporary madness, "worshipped of thy Mary's heart, father of the orphan Edmund, why hast thou left me in a scorning cruel world?—Oh! this pang, for past transgressions, now it comes—but I have gazed in innocence upon thee, and in innocence would I follow thee through worlds of untried being:—And was poor Mary in thy latest thoughts?—Sad broken hearted wretch, betake thee to the grave—but no—not yet—the virtuous, widowed, loved Antonia, now demands me." So saying, I darted from the maddening scene, to seek the presence of my suffering mistress.

"I was hastening to her chamber, when met by Lady Glenroy; a strange complica-

tion of passions appeared in her pale countenance, she trembled excessively, and in a stern voice demanded where my unbecoming disrespectful grief was carrying me. "Stop me not," cried I wildly, for my sorrow knew not form nor ceremony, "stop me not, I seek my widowed lady—I loved the cold dead Avondale, and am the fit companion for her agonized hours." "Poor frantic wretch, begone!" she cried with fierce disdain, "begone, who wants thee? never more shalt thou approach her presence, to disturb her with thy horrid whine." "Not let me see her?" said I, humbly sinking at her feet, "not let me see her? I must give her the last sigh of Avondale, and pray her to preserve his baby." Increased fury now shook her Ladyship's frame, and screaming loudly for her servants, she commanded them to force me to some remote turret of the castle, that my affected yells might not reach her ear; she was instantly obeyed, they carried me to the northern wing of the castle, and there left me to pursue whatever steps best suited my distracted mind."

"My mistress—Oh! my mistress!" exclaimed I, almost enfrenzied at the thoughts of her condition, and the dangers I felt, I *knew* her enveloped with, "and is your Mary, your loved, your honored, faithful Mary, never more to see you? Who will watch you with the care of Mary?—Who will weep, will mourn for Avondale like Mary?—Spirit of the beloved, yet guide me to her." A confusion of horrid imaginings took possession of my anguished soul, and in a few minutes with some exertion of my remaining strength I forced the door and silently quitted the apartment."

"I wandered a considerable time through various intricate passages, for that part of the edifice was unexplored, unknown to me, until I found myself in the outward court of the castle, under the stupendous walls of the eastern tower, which I perfectly knew enclosed my beloved lady. The rain was falling heavy on my defenceless head, and the piercing wind blowing loud and fearful round me;

yet the cold was unfelt, and the wet unheeded, yet I could but remember, in bitterness remember, that the sweet voice which would have softly bade me take repose, and the dear hand that would gently lead me to it, perhaps was clenched in agony and anguish. "Hard flinty walls!" said I, pressing my beating head against them, "hard flinty walls, and yet more soft than human hearts, yet let me rest upon you—they force me from a blessed friend, and whirl me to despair."

"How long I had sustained the pitiless pelting of the storm I know not, but soon I heard the heavy castle bell toll out the dreary midnight hour, when unable longer to endure the uncertainty of Lady Avondale's state, I resolved to re-enter the castle, and apply to some of the superior domestics for some information. I was about to pursue this intention, when a sound, something like a suppressed cry, assailed my ear. It might be the howling of the wind, echoing through the turrets—yet I listened, and again heard it—

a momentary pause in the hollow murmuring of the blast, returned it yet more distinct, and convinced me the sounds descended, and that they were the groaning pangs of my angelic Lady. "Blessed creature!" cried I, half frantic, extending my arms on the rugged walls, "blessed creature, and art thou suffering anguish likened unto that of heaven's eternal vengeance, without thy Avondale to sustain and bless, without thy Mary to attend and watch thee?—This must be answered one day:—Oh! merciless, merciless:—Oh! my friend, my mistress—*thou canst not to a living husband bear thy child, nor bear him bless thee when a man is born—no—no—*"

"Thus uttering incoherent sentences, I continued to run wildly round the turret, until almost exhausted by my agony, I staggered against it, and in falling to the earth felt a something give way, and sink with a heavy pressure under me; all was dark as the grave, to look therefore was vain, but in stretching out my hands to arise, I grasped a ladder;

ladder; I felt, from a sudden hope that darted across my imagination, as if I had found a valued friend, and exerting all the strength cold and sorrow had left me, I raised the ladder, and placed it firm as possible against the wall. My heart revived, and, fearless of danger, I ascended, to steal another glance, if not of Lady Avondale, at least of her chamber. In perfect safety I gained the upper step, which reached within a very few inches of her window, happily—yet was it happy, part of the curtain was undrawn, the room was nearly dark, receiving only an imperfect gleam of light from a quivering lamp, placed in a remote corner.”

“The voice of groaning was hushed, but deep and hollow sighs still issued from the bed, and soon in feeble accents “*my Mary!*” Impatience now shook me to desperation—I shrieked—shrieked again, and on striking my hands violently on the window, alas! too strong to yield to my exhausted blow, beheld two figures rush with terror and alarm,
from

from a dark recess in the room. Excuse, continued Mrs. Barlowe, with an emotion painful, strong, and visibly repressed, excuse a description of their persons; my imagination was prejudiced, all my senses confused, and my view but transient and imperfect, a rash judgment would therefore be injustice; but to return, they trembled excessively, and their voices were low, yet I could as the low gusts of wind, spent by their own violence, sunk in a languid murmur, distinguish words of horrid import."

"Swift," said one, who appeared the superior, "swift, be cautious and be secret, and through life command my utmost power, "I dare not do it," said the wretched hireling somewhat irresolute in the deed, I dare not do a deed of ——" Here the rising blast blew shrill, and overwhelming the voice, the remaining words were lost. "Do as thou wilt," resumed the other, "only deliver me from my fears, begone, avoid all conference, descend the private stair, and escape by the north

north postern." With tottering steps the wretch was then leaving the apartment, the mystery was unveiled, and too perfectly I understood the fatal scene before me. As the hireling turned to go, a sigh of more than common anguish burst from the unattended bed of the suffering Antonia, and again I heard in weaker plaintive sounds, "Oh! Mary, Mary!" my soul was now wound up to the most torturing degree of mortal agony and horror, and my voice receiving from the poignancy of my feelings something more than human energy, I shrieked, in madness shrieked, "*murder not.*" Alas! the person was already gone, and heard me not repeat the dread command of the eternal; but it struck the ear of the vile employer, who stood aghast, looked fearfully around, and exclaiming in horror, "What do I hear? Spirit of the dead torment me not," rushed from the scene of dark and hidden guilt."

"I soon forsook my post, and with wild impatience descending the ladder, flew round

to the north postern, if possible to intercept the messenger, but she had been too speedy in her black errand, her guilty feet out-ran my honest great design, and all my purposes were lost in her escape: But, as if pitied, and allowed by some kind being to take a last look, receive a last farewell of my beloved unhappy mistress, I found the gates still open, and with some difficulty, as it was dark, and the passages intricate and little known to me, reached my Lady's chamber. There reigned the calm of everlasting silence: The curtains of the bed were undrawn, on one side Lady Glenroy reclined weeping, and on the other stood two female attendants."

"As I approached Lady Glenroy looked up, frowned, yet added, "Disturb not these solemn moments with thy unheeded lamentations, or again you must be ordered to retire."

"Solemn indeed!—My loved, my fainted Mistress, her beauteous face was shaded with
the

the pale hue of death; her brilliant eyes were nearly fixed in darkness, and only soft sighs declared the angelic being in a suffering world. Kneeling beside her, I pressed her cold hand to my trembling lips she feebly shuddered, but raising her sweet eyes, knew and smiled upon me, her spirit seemed to struggle with unuttered thought; thrice she essayed to speak but alas! it would not be, for already had the angel of death, chilled her gentle heart, and the last sigh of suffering nature lingered on her pallid lip. "Blessed, blessed Lady!" I could no more, she closed her eyes, opened them, looked kind, wishful, yet serene, and without the faintest struggle her spotless soul rejoined the hovering spirit of her husband in the realms of everlasting peace and joy."

"I heard—beheld no more :—From strong and alarming convulsions I fell into a raging fever, which continued so long, that on my being able to set up, I found myself in the care of an old nurse, and the castle deserted by the whole family of Glenroy. All the ancient

cient and attached domestics of Lord and Lady Avondale were discharged, and the grounds rented out to the neighbouring farmers, Lady Glenroy was now the sole heiress of the vast domains, until her second son came of age, to resume the title and be invested with the estates; right happy am I, said Mrs. Barlowe bowing, that they have so excellent a Lord."

"When sufficiently recovered to attend to business, the nurse presented me a letter from Lady Glenroy, enclosing a note for mourning, and the expences of my illness, with an order to resign my care of the castle to a female domestic, commissioned by her to preside as housekeeper: Methought in this command I a second time lost my revered Lord and Lady; to leave the spot where I had been so happy, so long endeared by their gracious presence, where I had been cherished, where I had been loved, and where their sacred remains would for ever repose, inflicted on my heart a pang more severe than that of dissolution, and in the most moving language

language, and with the deepest humility, I besought her Ladyship to retain me at the castle, in any situation, however menial or unbeneficial."

"Most fortunately for me the housekeeper she had appointed objected to the office; the loneliness and solitude disgusted her, and the recent calamities which had happened in the family inspired her with a horror so excessive that her mind was filled with the most terrific imaginings, and I really believe her fears were the origin of the various reports circulated afterwards, of Avondale being haunted with unquiet spirits—Be that as it may, when she declined the situation, and returned to London, I received a command to preside in her place, and with this boy, my Edmund, my only earthly comfort, have passed the last eighteen years of a cheerless life, my only solace visiting the sacred tomb of my lamented friends; it was raised to their memory by the munificence of Lady Glenroy, and soon became my darling resort; there I shut out all thoughts of a cruel, afflicting world; there

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contemplated their excellence, and there supplicated to meet them in the realms of bliss."

"The munificence and kindness of Lord and Lady Avondale during their lives (for their sudden unexpected death lost me all beside) enabled me to bestow on Edmund a virtuous and liberal education; a serious and pensive turn of mind happily led him to prefer the sacred profession of the church, and the Rector of Avondale, on my relating my secret history, without extenuation, gave him the curacy in which he now officiates: Dear worthy youth! in him I hope to find the support of a declining and unhappy age, and in performing the gentle duties of a son he will answer the great end of piety and moral virtue, and secure a permanent and perfect felicity in the bosom of eternal repose. His birth is little suspected, and as Lord Glenroy's family has never been at the castle since the period already mentioned, until the present time, it is to them totally unknown that such a being exists; his residence is now fixed
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in this lonely village, yet he often visits me at Avondale, passing among the few servants and peasants as the son of a dear deceased brother, bequeathed to my care and protection."

"As my attendance could easily be dispensed with among the train of Lord Glenroy's domestics," concluded Mrs. Barlowe, colouring deeply, "Edmund prevailed on me to solicit Lord Avondale's permission to pass a few months with a friend during their sojourn at the castle; my son was the friend, leave was instantly granted, and with all that condescending kindness with which his Lordship has ever honored me. Soothed by the endearing duty of my Edmund, and gratified by beholding him practise virtue without affectation, and perform all the rituals of devotion with cheerful piety, I have passed the latter months of summer in this quiet humble dwelling, where I am happy in having had an opportunity to accommodate this company in so tempestuous a night."

"When

"When she had finished her very affecting and interesting narrative, Lord St. Clair thanked her, and approved her conduct in the most delicate and proper terms, and assured her of his interest to place the poor Edmund in a condition where his abilities could more enlighten, and his merit be better rewarded than in that sequestered spot. During the time he was speaking to Mrs. Barlowe, Lord Avondale and myself were lost in the depth of melancholy reflections; horrid ideas, too torturing for expression, swelled my anxious breast, while many a remembered circumstance overwhelmed his Lordship with deep and painful confusion."

"It must be so," said he, after a long pause, and turning to Mrs. Barlowe, with a sadly penetrating look, demanded whether her Edmund had not been at the castle during Miss Barry's residence there? "Yes," replied she tremulously, "I fear once alarmed her with an idea of having seen a spirit." — "Alarm indeed!" repeated his Lordship, recollection

collection tearing his generous bosom, "alarm indeed! but it was just, the monition wise, and though confessedly not spoken from the grave, shall be obeyed if—if—" Here his voice faltered, he ceased to speak, and the whole party except Lord St. Clair, who looked wistfully at each in turn, for explanation of what he had heard, became so painfully embarrassed, that the entrance of the postilion with the information that the carriage was repaired and ready, proved a happy relief, by diverting their thoughts to another subject."

"In a few minutes we took leave of the interesting young curate, and his ill fortunèd mother, but not before Lord Avondale had ordered her to repair to the castle with all convenient speed. During our ride, his Lordship appeared buried in the deepest melancholy, sometimes a heavy sigh would burst from his labouring breast; at others incoherent obscure sentences would escape his lips, yet he addressed no one, and his thoughts were too delicate to be obtruded on by ques-
tions

tions however well intended, so Lord St. Clair and I only looked on him with silent commiserating respect, and in this condition, with all imaginable speed, we reached the house of Mr. Fitzaubin."

CHAP. VII.

SCARCELY had the fond impatient St. Clair inquired for his Ethelinde, when, without the ceremony of being announced, Basil Carr hastily entered the parlour; a momentary start of pleasure flushed his honest cheek as he beheld us all assembled, he seemed breathless, and in unconnected sentences addressed us all by turn.

“For the love of Christ,” cried he wildly, “get her from that cockatrice of the castle; her wicked works are all out—dead folks will rest in their graves—ah! bitter and bad were the doings that made Lady Avondale walk about, but worse will be done still, if you all don’t make haste—and then one lady will walk as long and as fast as the other.”

In this manner, without intermission, he ran on a considerable time, and with difficulty we could collect that you was ensnared to the castle for some black concealed purpose, and that he had secrets of importance to disclose. His secrets at that moment were unheeded, your deliverance was our sole consideration, and how to accomplish it our only care; your husband’s mind was on the rack of anxious horror, and leaving Basil to unfold his important secrets to others, without having fixed on any plan of procedure, attended by Lord Avondale and myself, he set out for the castle, and undetermined as ever we reached the avenue, but after a few minutes serious debate

bate, it was resolved as the safest and most prudent method for Lord St. Clair and I to wait at the entrance of the grove, until Lord Avondale had gained admission, and sent us intelligence.

We were pursuing our way, with all possible speed, when a rustling noise among the withered leaves induced us to look back, and we perceived a man, wrapped up in a furtout, walking at a hurried pace ; St. Clair imagined the figure not totally unknown to him, and we followed quick, but as if he wished to avoid a meeting, he darted down an intricate path, and was out of sight in a moment. This circumstance creating little alarm, without farther comment we proceeded on our way, until an unlucky stone taking the foot of Lord Avondale, he fell, and so severely sprained his ankle that he was unable to move : The soul of St. Clair trembled with impatience, he lamented the accident as being painful to his friend, and unfortunate to himself, but he could no longer delay ; he assisted his friend

to rise, "adieu, dear Avondale till a happier moment" said he, pressing his hand with energy, "adieu, Menville will attend you while I hasten to preserve my love—from what I know not."

Lord Avondale looked kindly, wishfully in his face, tried to walk, but the effort was vain, "Would I could go," said he dejectedly, "I am no husband, my St. Clair, yet your Ethelinde is—is precious; let Menville then attend you, and when you are admitted return here to me." To this St. Clair assented, no more passed, and in a few minutes we reached the castle gates. Long we knocked and called, still no one appeared; every thing was buried in profound silence, an awful gloom pervaded all around, and even the blackened battlements seemed to threaten nameless horror; torturing apprehensions, wrung the breast of St. Clair, he struck his head in frenzy, and had been driven to some act of desperation, but that a man appeared upon

upon the ramparts, and advancing, in a low voice demanded his business.

"Descend," replied his Lordship with impatience, "descend, I come from Lord Avondale, admit me, and my utmost power shall reward you; a lady is betrayed within these walls, swift, then, and let me save her." "Betrayed indeed," repeated the honest warder, with a groan, "but were you our dear Lord himself I could not give admittance; the gates are locked, the draw-bridge up, and each port-cullis closed, and scarce I know who gave these orders, yet well I ween they are given for no good, and I can only offer this assistance," continued he, throwing down a strong rope, "my arms are old, tis true, but something pithy still, and since you come from my loved Lord, and to do the gentlest lady good, why every nerve shall crack before they fail you."

Half transported with this unexpected honest friend, he grasped the rope and being

very light and active, and the warder faithful, in perfect safety I beheld him gain the ramparts, when waving his hands for me to be gone, fearless he followed his guide and disappeared. Raising a mental prayer for his preservation, and your deliverance, I hastened to Lord Avondale, and found him reclining a very few paces from the spot in which I had left him. With much difficulty I assisted him to rise, and at a slow lingering pace was supporting him on the way, when suddenly two men in masks rushed from a neighbouring thicket; they were armed, we doubted not their purpose, and Lord Avondale wearing a sword, though almost exhausted drew it, and nobly prepared to defend himself and me; his gallant spirit, his intrepid conduct, had assuredly laid the assassins low, but as he turned round to engage them, one by a sudden spring, unexpected, cowardly came behind him, and plunged a poignard in his back; that villain instantly fled.

and he was supported with this unexpected aid
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Aghast

Aghast with grief and horror speechless I stood, and receiving the dying youth in my arms, we sunk on the earth together; regardless of the other murderer, I was weakly endeavouring to assuage the gushing wound, when fearing, I suppose, that his accomplice had left the work incomplete, he buried his remorseless dagger in one of the most noble hearts that ever beat with life, and then followed his villainous companion with precipitation to the woods.

My fight was nearly blasted with the deed, my blood ran chill, and my heart felt as if it would have forced a passage through my suffering breast. In the horror of the moment, unmindful of a christian's meekness, in agony I cried, "Oh! God, in thy great day of wrath forget not this inhuman murder, but let thy justice blast the wretch who dared deface thy fairest highly favored work." "Be calm, my friend," softly interrupted the dying youth, in feeble accents, "be calm, and let far different sounds sustain and sooth my parting
F 4 spirit;

"Spirit; my hours are done, my moments near a close, and never more on earth shall Avondale behold the forms of those he loves, in happier regions we may meet again — my heart grows sick—the earth recedes—then ere we part for ever, Oh! dear Menville, bear my kindest wishes, dying sighs, to that fair excellence, whom too well I know will sorrow for my early fate, yet it is just, I expiate.— Oh! say, also," said he, drawing longer and deeper gasps, "say also to the angelic Ethelinde, I die most happy, in the place of him more precious to her soul—Oh! bless her—bless her all indulgent heaven—may all her sorrows end with me—may she never feel a pang but for my death, nor shed a tear but on my early grave; may they be few, for I— Oh! Menville, fare thee well, I now am—" Here he stopt, respiration ceased, and casting on me one resigning languid look, his eyes serenely closed, and sinking in the slumbers of eternal rest his gentle spirit fled to the regions of the blessed.

"Never,

Never, never had I experienced such a moment; never had my resignation to the awful decrees of heaven been so severely tried as when I pressed the lifeless body to my throbbing heart, a heart torn by conflicting passions: Grief and horror for the untimely unmerited fate of the worthy Avondale, and gratitude and joy, that the pupil, the child of my anxious care, had escaped it; and lastly, the contending emotions it would cause in you, my gentle Ethelinde; altogether, turned my mind to a chaos of the most distracting confusion.

How long I remained in this condition is not possible for me to ascertain, for every faculty becoming soon absorbed, in the pale object before me, I heeded not the passing hour, until the murmur of different voices inducing me to look up, I found it was almost dark, and though indistinctly could perceive several people advancing, I called not, but intended on their nearer approach, to ask their assistance in removing the body.

They came forward, but before I could speak my wish, a shriek of anguish pierced my ear, and in a moment I beheld Lady Juliet prostrate by the breathless Avondale. My God! her looks can never be forgotten! A sad yet wild expression marked each charming feature; she gazed with meek despair, clasped the murdered form of him she so much loved, and raising her eyes to heaven, deep convulsive sighs burst from her desolated bosom. Mrs. Fitzaubin and her sister were of the party, and would have gently forced her from the body, but with the calm resolution of a fixed despair she ordered them to leave her. "Leave me," said she, "part us not, nor attempt to shake the settled purpose of my soul; living I loved him, and in death will not forsake him: — Oh! Avondale, my life, my love, look kindly on me, and hear your Juliet's vow; my murdered, yet still my beauteous Albert, we will pay the forfeit of our mother's crimes, then rest within our grave in peace eternal."

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Her sorrows were far beyond the reach of human consolation, and we suffered her to yield to its agony in the hope that it would partly exhaust itself: — But the evening was now far advanced, it was also dark and stormy, and though a refuge from the beating tempest, was certainly necessary for all, the confusion of various horrors and fears which surrounded us was so great, as to render us not only incapable of action, but even of direction; at length Mr. Nugent proposing to remove the body of Lord Avondale to the castle, roused us from our dreadful stupour; your danger, St. Clair's condition, all rushed upon my mind, and present calamity was lost in the dread of yet greater horrors. "Let us then bear these poor remains," said I, "if possible, penetrate the mystery which involves us in such agony, and if not too late, preserve others from the malign influence within these walls, and from destructive revenge."

Lady Juliet was now become passive as the feeble infant; her looks were pale and wild, yet she arose at our request, and with a firmness which inspired us with astonishment, followed the mournful bearers of the body to the castle gates. "I wish we were all in and well out again," said Basil Carr, as he knocked loudly at the outer postern, "for I believe mischief is still busy, ah! every body is not shut out for nothing."

Our knocking and calling was repeated, but still no one appeared to give us admission, and still a death like silence prevailed, except now and then, when the murmur of distant shrieks, or the hollow sighing of the storm, awfully struck the listening ear. We were seized with the most horrible conjectures, only Basil retained the power of speech. "Ah! woe be to all castle building," resumed he, "but for castles and the like, this young Lord had been living—and—hush!" interrupted the trembling Agnes, anxious for her old mother, who she knew was either dead

or

or living within the castle, "hush, I think a light glimmers in the north tower." There did indeed, and soon another appeared, as if advancing on the ramparts. I shook with impatience as it drew near, and in an interval of the wind heard, though indistinctly, the words, "I come," methought the voice was Lord St. Clair's, and before the momentary hope of his safety could subside, the gate was opened, and I beheld him, with a countenance illumined by the rays of pleasure.

By the feeble glare of the light he caught a transient glimpse of the dead Avondale, of his darling sister's despairing looks, and he became cold and speechless as the stone on which he stood; he gazed on each alternately, beat his head agonized, and at length exclaimed, "Alas! my sister, Oh! my friend, I am thy fate; you fell where my destruction was designed."

We now moved towards the hall of the castle, and had scarcely laid the body on the
oaken

oaken table, before Lady Glenroy entered from a lower apartment, and soon after Mrs. Harrop, appeared; her old emaciated frame seemed shaking to dissolution; a tumult of agonizing thoughts visibly distorted the pale features of Lady Glenroy, even on her entrance; at the sight of St. Clair she started back in horror, but on a transient view of her murdered son, ever her pride and darling, she uttered a dismal groan, clenched her hands, and shrieking, "Hell! — Bothwell has deceived me!" fell into the most dreadful and terrifying convulsions. You, dear Ethelinde, was then inquired for: — "She lives," said Lord St. Clair, "I hope to happiness."

It seems, continued Mr. Menville, you darted from the chamber in the northern turret, alarmed by some uncommon noise, before Lord St. Clair recovered from horror and astonishment sufficiently to decide on the safest method to assure you he was living; for in his concealment behind the tapestry he had overheard your conversation with Both-

wel, and dreaded the effects of sudden surprise and joy on spirits so enfeebled as yours. He was about to seek you, when in crossing the court of the castle, he heard our loud and repeated knocks, and being perfectly convinced he could admit no one so inimical to his peace as those within the castle, hastened with the assistance of the old warder, to give us admission. In your confusion and the intricacy of this fabric, you had missed each other, and again he was traversing the different apartments to find you when you entered the hall, and mistaking, I suppose, the corpse of Lord Avondale for your St. Clair, you lost remembrance in insensibility.

Here Mr. Menville closed his narrative, and Ethelinde raising her eyes and hands meekly to heaven, worshipped the great dispenser of mercy, for the safety of St. Clair, while her gentle pious heart struggled with the conflict between sorrow and resignation, for the loss of her amiable adoring friend, and the despair of her wretched sister. She was
paying

paying the tributary tears of regret to his memory, as she reclined on the bosom of her dear Signora, when Lord St. Clair entered, introducing Mrs. Barlowe, who, in obedience to her deceased Lord's commands, had arrived at Avondale to promote purposes, his generous nature, alas! was never to feel the disinterested gratification of seeing completed.

The joy of Ethelinde and St. Clair on their meeting, though delicious and sincere in itself, was yet saddened by the melancholy influence of the unhappy circumstances which had reduced those most deservedly precious to death, and endless irremediable sorrow and regret. She wept for her gentle, generous, disinterested friend, yet still more lamented the disappointed hopes of his affianced wife, the lovely sorrowing Juliet. The body of Lord Avondale now lay in all the magnificence of gloomy state, in a spacious Gothic chamber hung with black, and illumined by lights of the same sable hue, and notwithstanding

standing the silent horror of the awful scene, the disconsolate Lady Juliet left it neither night or day, and only received nourishment to be free from the importunities of her friends, who began to entertain the most serious and alarming apprehensions, not only for her senses but her life. Her grief was calm yet immoveable, she shed no tear, uttered no complaint, and would speak to none except her brother and sister, and only to them when death or Avondale was the subject.

Meantime Lady Glenroy was given over by her physicians; she was struggling with a violent fever, and, in any interval of reason, would raise her hands and eyes, implore her brother's pardon, and interposition to re-unite her when dead to her murdered son. Lord Glenroy had been sent for on the commencement of her illness, and on his arrival appeared bewildered in a confusion of ideas which sunk him in melancholy. His Lordship was a weak inoffensive man, formed indeed with kindly feelings, and just principles, but of so
dull

dull and indolent a nature, that he never exerted them, but left the sole direction of his family and fortune to the guidance of his wife, who possessing a violent and haughty disposition and arrogating a superior power and consequence for the acquisition of rank and wealth, she had acquired by the demise of her brother without heirs, governed both him and his family in the most arbitrary manner to be imagined, and only Lord Avondale the heir of her own family honors, and ever her favorite child, experienced kindness or condescension.

Lord Glenroy felt the pang of a father for a deserving son, cut off by murder, in the pride of youth and happy expectations, but he was happily a stranger to the tortures with which an accusing conscience harrowed the soul of his wretched and greatly guilty wife, and expressed not more astonishment at her awful appeals to the spirit of her brother, than at hearing she had returned to the castle before the information of her son's death. Her domestics had

all

all been dispatched to town some time before, by her own orders, to prepare for her arrival, and he himself, with his suite, had conducted her Ladyship and woman to the seat of a married daughter, where he had left her to adjust a dispute concerning a newly purchased estate in a distant county; he therefore could assign no reason for her sudden return to Avondale, but lost himself in the labyrinth of conjecture, until the unhappy woman herself explained the mystery.

One morning, after a weary night, spent in all the anguish of too late remorse, and agony of approaching death, she requested to see Lord St. Clair and Mr. Menville, and also desired the attendance of Mrs. Barlowe and Lord Glenroy: Her request met immediate compliance; they repaired to her chamber, and found her supported with pillows in bed by her women; her countenance was shaded by the ghastly hue of death, and every pallid feature seemed moulded by the hand of black despair.

“I am,” said she in weak and tremulous accents, when they were seated around her, “I am a pitiable instance, that though guilt and treachery may succeed, and even triumph for a time, the hour of retribution will arrive, and confusion overtake the wretched perpetrator; that awful eye, felt every where tho’ never seen, that kindly watches over nature’s works, that powerful hand which wisely guides the universal chain of being, in punishment for my repeated crimes, levelled the shaft that laid my guiltless darling Avondale in dust, where I designed the death of Lord St. Clair.—For Avondale I sinned, in Avondale I suffered—for him I wronged a noble brother—for him I sent poor Menville’s sister mourning to the grave—for him I doomed——Oh! what pang is this which gnaws my parting spirit!—Sustain me, saving mercy; in these latest trembling moments of redeeming grace sustain me, to render justice, and, if not too late, to expiate and atone—to enrich, exalt my son, I doomed the new-born infant of my brother to destruction, yet long it survived,
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escaped my vengeance, lived unknown and wretched—Oh! horror, horror, my brain is burning—madness returns—that sting—my brother's child once lived—was ruined, perished, murdered—by—Oh! Oh! Oh!”

Her distracted groans appalled the auditors with horror, they feared her tortured spirit would escape without allowing time for further explanation of her dreadful half disclosed meaning; in a few minutes, however, her frenzy subsided, and again yielded to the saddened calmness of despair, but utterance had now nearly failed her, and only between deep convulsive gasps and hollow sighs she could earnestly gaze on those around her, and feebly say, “Glenroy forgive me!—Harrop—Barlowe can disclose—Oh! Edmund—yet a son exists—St. Clair thy pardon—Spirits rest in peace, I expiate, farewell—farewell—Oh! for a grave that could obscure for ever evermore!”

She

She now sunk exhausted on her pillow, the power of speech seemed lost, and she appeared silently hastening to the precincts of the gloomy tomb, when her innocent unhappy husband, with a degree of horror, shame, and consternation, which no conscious rectitude of his own could enable him to sustain, without a large portion of confusion, attended the melancholy and almost petrified company to another apartment. So painfully and greatly do the vices of those with whom we are connected by consanguinity or alliance reflect upon ourselves, that though we feel no inward reproach, and shudder at the guiltiness of our relative, we shrink abashed from the penetrating glance of every innocent eye.

Such was the pitiable condition of Lord Glenroy; though he had a conscience void of offence, the deepening tints of shame overspread his cheeks, and but that it remained with him to perform an act of retributive justice, though of what peculiar nature he was altogether ignorant, he would have welcomed

welcomed the concealing gloom of a grave rather than have encountered the impatient, penetrating, inquiring looks of those, who had witnessed his wife's guilty confession.

It excited no small degree of wonder in his agitated mind, and indeed in most of the others, how Mrs. Harrop, a poor illiterate domestic, scarce ever seen, and little known, should have the power to unfold a mystery of such consequence.

CHAP. VIII.

LORD GLENROY with much diffidence expressed his surprise at the above circumstance, and though he doubted not that
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that there was a mystery to be disclosed, rather imagined Lady Glenroy had misnamed the persons necessary to its developement: Mr. Menville with a delicacy peculiar to his own generous nature, gently hinted, that there was a great probability she possessed a knowledge of secret transactions of the family, as he recollected that Basil Carr, her son-in-law, on the day of Lord St. Clair's arrival at Avondale, had declared, he had most important secrets to discover, but that the pressing dangers of those very dear, and the fatal incidents occurring since, had totally erased from his remembrance, till the moment when it was revived with trembling anxiety by Lady Glenroy's affecting avowal of long concealed circumstances.

"I think also," continued he, taking the hand of Mrs. Barlowe with much kindness, "I think, my dear woman, dear to my anguished heart for your respectful lasting attachment to my early fated lovely sister, that Lady Glenroy made a reference to you;—

a late narrative of your's can never be forgotten, Mrs. Barlowe; it then shook a brother's heart to agony with horrid apprehension, nor did the virtuous noble minded Avondale listen unmoved. Your descriptions were then imperfect, many circumstances I am now convinced must have been totally suppressed, and others, from respectful delicacy to one, who, alas! can no longer be sensible of the kindness, so altered, obscured, and meliorated, as to prevent their meaning, and render them faint nameless shadows of what they were. You will now perceive, added he, with soft solemnity, that justice to the long wronged dead, and perhaps to the still injured living, demands an explanation unextenuated; Lady Glenroy mentioned—"here his voice grew weak and faltered—"Lady Glenroy mentioned a murdered child, yet a living son—an Edmund!—Mrs. Barlowe then I adjure you, by the great tremendous God of truth, whose all pervading eye beholds us now, to fear no human power, but speak the darkened deed which long has laboured in your for-

rowing heart, like pent up tempests in the troubled air; fear not, then, but speak."

Lord Glenroy was struck with reverence on hearing such an awful adjuration; had her answer been to criminate himself, and turn him destitute and friendless to a pitiless world, he could not have felt a greater degree of suspensive agony, and he could only impute it to the share he knew his wife to have in the long hidden guilt.

Lord St. Clair's sensations were perfectly serene on the occasion, neither hope, fear, nor expectation, agitated one movement of his soul, except that his friendship for the worthy Menville inspired a wish to see the child of his beloved sister restored to a parent's inheritance; yet the recollection of Lady Glenroy's confession and obscure expressions confused his mind with a variety of conjectures, and he could not but wonder why his pardon had been implored on that occasion; his ideas were various indeed, yet the only trace of probability

probability they felt was, that the blooming modest Edmund, the long reputed child of youthful indiscretion, would turn out the legal heir of Avondale, cherished by Mrs. Barlowe through her faithful love and adherence to the ill-fated parents, and concealed until a safe and favorable moment encouraged disclosure.

Whether such an idea had entered the breast of the anxious Menville cannot be ascertained, but assuredly the colour heightened in his cheek, and the name of Edmund was pronounced with a tremulous emotion. While he spoke, the countenance of Mrs. Barlowe changed alternately, from an ashy paleness to the deepest red; tears of long repressed sorrow, of painfully awakened remembrance, filled her eyes, and her whole frame trembled with agitation; all the recollected pangs of many an anguished year rushed into her thoughts, and in idea she beheld the beautiful father of Edmund expiring, and felt the last faint pressure of the sweet Antonia's hand.

The sad reflective retrospect was too agonizing for her spirits, and she sunk silent and almost insensible at their feet. Menville raised her with the mildest commiseration, the dew of gentle pity hung upon his honest cheek, and fearing the ardour of his address had betrayed or implied some doubt of her sincerity, in the kindest accents he entreated she would be composed; assuring her, at the same time, he placed the most perfect confidence in all she should utter.

“You may indeed, Sir,” replied she becoming something more collected and serene, “you may indeed, but I have little more to say upon the subject than I have already related, unless to declare that Lady Glenroy and Mrs. Harrop were the people I beheld in the dying chamber of Lady Avondale; and I also must affirm that Mrs. Harrop received a new-born infant from the hands of her Ladyship, but whether male or female, whether exposed to the compassion of strangers, or by violent means consigned to an early grave, I

am

am altogether ignorant, though from the gloomy terrors of Lady Glenroy when within these walls, the unceasing horror of Mrs. Harrop, and her extreme repugnance to reside at the castle, I fear the worst imagination can form."

A ray of unacknowledged hope now forsook the bosom of Mr. Menville; almost unconscious to himself he had indulged it for many hours, and in all the bitterness of disappointed expectation and the torture of increased suspense, he cried, "then Edmund is the son of Avondale, but not my sister."

A little recomposed, he ordered Mrs. Harrop to be immediately brought before him; she indeed was the only being upon earth who could dispel the vain illusion of deceitful hope, and give to anxious doubt and trembling fear their horrid certainty.

To relate how a woman so miserable, ignorant, and obscure as Mrs. Harrop, should

a train such consequence as to be vested with power, to decide the fate of the infant heir of Avondale, it will be highly requisite to revert to a very early period of her own life, however insignificant it may appear. She was daughter to one of the peasantry of Lady Glenroy's father, and brought up about the family mansion to assist the dairy maids in their more laborious work; her disposition was fawning, artful, and avaricious; every honest principle yielded in her breast to the love of gain, and there was no consideration she would not have bartered to gratify this one favorite passion, the accumulation of wealth.

She was much of an age with Lady Glenroy, and during the years of infancy, and even youth, was the humble obedient slave of her proud and petulant humours; Margaret never disputed her tyrant's will, however unreasonable or despotic; she flattered her foibles, bowed beneath her pride and passion, and worshipped her smiles even though bestowed in disdain, and by these means became so necessary,

cessary, that the young lady honored her with a degree of notice and condescension to which neither her merit nor rank gave her the smallest pretensions.

Her Ladyship's parents could not approve the intimacy between them, but supposing it nothing more than the capricious attachment of a gay unthinking nature, they scarce deigned it a second thought, or slight reprehension until her nuptials with Lord Glenroy, when, notwithstanding her mother's remonstrances against such glaring impropriety, she placed Margaret about her person, and as if inspired by the very spirit of contradiction, seemed to redouble her kindness, as it was reprobated and condemned.

Margaret was still young, when she married a domestic of the family, and to the great disgust of the other servants not only retained her influence, but her place, with considerable privileges; but the period was approaching when mutual obligations were to bind

them yet more firm than a capricious partiality, for with no higher appellation could Lady Glenroy's regard for such an unworthy dependant be dignified. Mrs. Harrop had children very fast, but that they might not interfere with her duties to her Lady, they were put out to nurse as soon as born.

It happened she had just recovered from one of her accouchments, when Lady Glenroy gave being to the amiable Lord Avondale, and by her too infatuated mistress was appointed his wet nurse. Callous indeed and very cold must be the female heart that cannot feel the sweet throbs of affection for a smiling infant nourished at her breast! this child was lovely and engaging, and Mrs. Harrop certainly cherished and loved him with unaffected tenderness. He had nearly attained his sixth year, and with his mother was on a visit to his uncle and aunt at Avondale, when the fatal accident happened, which doomed the amiable Lord to an early grave.

It

It may be remembered, that on the expiring Avondale being carried into the hall, his fond Antonia lost the knowledge of every sorrow in total insensibility. The grief and confusion, in which his Lordship's death involved the family, engaged every domestic, the castle was a scene of anarchy, and Lady Glenroy and her maid were the only attendants of the dying widow, and found but too ready an hour to execute a foul design, without the faintest shade of suspicion.

From her temporary death Lady Avondale awoke in the pangs of child-birth, and in that moment the busy fiend whose open eyes are ever watching opportunities to tempt mortality, insinuated the bad thought to Lady Glenroy—What an hour to listen to the subtle pleader! Her only brother lay expiring, her sister in the dewy agony of death, and their innocent infant, looking speechless things to claim, to move one pitying thought. — Antonia's pangs soon ceased, her child was born, she heard its feeble voice, felt all her

danger, and besought for Mary, but Lady Avondale implored in vain for her; she would have too faithfully adhered to honest love and duty, and therefore was kept far from her till the deed was past recall, and speech expired in everlasting silence.

The child of Avondale was born, the father dead, each fainter breath reducing the poor mother to the dust, the infant's birth unknown to all, and only stood between her and immense possessions. — Avarice, ambition, could not resist the tempting demon's voice; she looked at Harrop — she shook — her tongue faltered, “Harrop I have loved you, spite of all have loved you, can you now be firm and serve me? serve your fostered child, your Albert, make him great and happy, and enrich yourself beyond your highest hopes.” — Harrop was dull — she comprehended not, but looked for clearer explanation. Lady Glenroy held the baby — “Behold this feeble imp, this unknown, unregarded stranger — remove it — crush it — and exalt young Albert.”

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The trembling wretch now understood her meaning—"Murder!"—said she, quaking, "Murder hath told strange things—I dare not—dare not do it." Just then they heard a noise, and darted from their dark recess. "I dare not—Lady Glenroy prayed, promised, bribed:—The greed of wealth, the power of avarice, at length subdued those principles given by God, to teach the human mind to aspire to heaven and the perfection of his angels. She took the infant in her shaking arms, yet still the spirit of humanity revolted from the murderer's office; she stood irresolute and fearful—refused—hesitated—yielded—a glittering bribe confirmed her savage purpose, and more un pitying than the ruthless indian when provoked, she quitted the apartment to execute the cruel commands of her Lady.

The horrid conference, her silent departure, gave the finishing blow to the bereft mother's existence. She had seen—heard all—but was past the power of utterance, and only

lived to cast one dying farewell look upon her faithful Mary. The child's birth was never known, nor even suspected; Mrs. Harrop's departure dissipated all the fears of Lady Glenroy, and well convinced her poor wronged sister could disclose nothing, she then summoned two female domestics belonging to the castle, and was ordering Mrs. Barlowe to be admitted when she entered the apartment.

While Lady Glenroy was exulting in the success and security of her guilt, the wretched instrument was hastening on her way to hide it in the impenetrable darkness of the grave; already she was on the banks of a rapid river, which disembogued its furious torrent into the sea; the tempest howled around her head, her body shuddered in the blast, and she was about to plunge the angel infant in the tumultuous waves, when some guardian spirit in the upper air, or else the voice of wonder-working conscience sounded in her ear, '*Thou shalt not murder.*' Aghast she shrieked, and desisting from her barbarous purpose, left the cliff,

cliff, and hastened to the village, where having hired a post chaise, by next morning reached a populous town, where she knew a woman who received parish children to nurse, and with this person she bargained for fifty pounds to take the infant heir of Avondale for ever. Sweet baby! what a luckless destiny was thine! — yet how kind to that thy cruel aunt devoted thee!

On Mrs. Harrop's return, her Ladyship ventured not on many questions, she was assured the child was disposed of, and never could molest her, and that sufficed. It may be wondered how one so fondly attached as Mrs. Barlowe, did not expose the scene she had witnessed: In the first place, before she was restored to any sense or recollection, the remains of Lord and Lady Avondale were reposed in the family vaults of their ancestors. Her single assertion was but a weak and simple testimony, and as she could adduce no other proof, that would only create suspicions and tarnish the name of a family her heart held

held in veneration, without promoting any good purpose, for she little doubted the unhappy infant having been consigned to death. These considerations at length determined her to remain silent, and leave the punishment of such atrocious wickedness to the retribution of avenging heaven.

Lady Glenroy indeed possessed her ill acquired wealth and honors, but she could not enjoy them; the cheerful day, the gloomy night, alike were drear and horrible; the iron tongue of murder never ceased to vibrate on her ear; torturing images pursued her thro' every scene of life; an injured brother, a dying sister's looks, their murdered infant, all incessantly haunted her imagination, and turned her bosom to a mansion only fit for demons. Avondale, the scene of harmless infancy, of guiltless youth, and happy years, was become to her the seat of horror and disgust, and she quitted it with a determination never to return, until her darling Albert was of age to take possession of the domains.

Such

Such was the condition of Lady Glenroy's mind, nor did the hand of divine vengeance fall lighter on her wretched accomplice; her husband, her children, all followed each other in quick succession to the grave, except the wife of honest Basil Carr; and even in her she found disappointment, for humble in her own innocent wishes, and weary of her mother's intolerable temper, she crushed her last expectation, by marrying the indigent basket-maker; accumulated sorrow awakened guilty reflection, and in the bitterness of remorse, and with an half formed intention to do an act of justice, she sought the woman to whom she had delivered the child of Lord Avondale: She had quitted her former residence and settled in London; thither Mrs. Harrop hastened, and there she was to endure the pang of late repentance—the child had died in its fifth year.

Overwhelmed with grief and despair she flew to Lady Glenroy with the intelligence, and severely deprecating the part she had acted

acted, declared she should never more know a moment's peace on earth: Lady Glenroy affected to join in her regrets and lamentations, and wished the hours could be recalled, the deed undone, and their tranquillity restored; but prayed her to be quiet as possible, lest such sudden grief, or some unguarded expression, might raise suspicion and discover all. But quiet is not for the guilty mind—her horrors increased, which, added to the infirmities of health, and a naturally morose temper, so tormented the domestics of Lord Glenroy, that a constant succession was forever taking place in the family, and at length the influence reached even her Ladyship, when deeming it more secure as well as happy to remove her, she persuaded her to accept an annual pension, and reside with her daughter Agnes; wretched every where, and hopeless of relief she consented, and reached Basil's humble yet contented cottage; but the quiet silent scene was ill calculated to restore her peace, a wounded conscience pursued her, and even inanimate objects around tended to imbitter the reflection of past transgressions.

CHAP,

CHAP. IX.

WHEN Mr. Menville had dispatched his orders for Mrs. Harrop to be brought into his presence, with Lord Glenroy and St. Clair, he re-joined Ethelinde and Mr. Fitzaubin's family in the saloon, and waited her appearance with trembling expectation and impatience. In less than an hour the room door opened and she entered, leaning on the arms of her son and daughter. The face of Basil was open as his heart was honest, and every sentiment glowed on his artless countenance; Agnes felt no shame, nor knew no crime, yet trembled under the confusion of her mother's guilt; but pitiable indeed appeared

peared the poor delinquent's condition, she struggled with variety of anguish, her soul was bursting, with unutterable things, and yet articulation was denied; she looked around her, gasped for breath, and sinking at the feet of St. Clair, who was seated by Ethelinde, wildly seized their hands, and between convulsive sighs at length exclaimed, "the—the heir—the heir of Avondale—the lives—Ethelinde is the child—the living heiress of Lord Avondale." She then fainted in the arms of her daughter.

Before we describe the effect Mrs. Harrop's extraordinary exclamation had on the auditors, it may be necessary to explain the means by which she became acquainted with the long concealed secret of her existence, and also give a summary account of some other circumstances which seem improbable, and indeed carry the appearance of magic.

The woman who received Lord Avondale's child from Mrs. Harrop, had kept her
but

but a very short time, before she began to consider that as she should derive no future advantages from her safety or welfare, the sooner she should dispose of her bargain the more clear gain she should have, and she determined at all events to place her in some public charity; with this resolution she quitted the town of D —, and arrived in London, and having named the child Ethelinde from a romance she had been reading, repaired on the proper day to the wicket of the foundling hospital; the fortunate coloured ball decided for the deserted Ethelinde, and with her name, and an assurance that she would never be claimed, fastened on her breast, she was once more delivered to the mercy and the care of strangers.

Her first nurse little expected that any inquiry would ever be made after her forsaken charge, and on Mrs. Harrop's most unwelcome second visit, had no other method to preserve herself from discovery, and perhaps punishment, than uttering the most solemn
asseverations

asseverations that she had treated the infant kindly, baptized her Ethelinde, and took her with her to France, where she had died at the age of five years.

The fortunate orphan has already been traced through the various scenes and circumstances which conducted her to Basil's cottage; she had been there but a short time when Mrs. Harrop fancied she bore a striking resemblance to the deceased Lady Avondale; the thought created a degree of uneasy wonder; the mystery of her situation caused alarm, and hearing the little girl (her reputed sister) named Ethelinde, filled her mind with dreads and conjectures not to be subdued; her sensations were complicated, she knew not what to hope or what to fear, and perhaps had Ethelinde been less reserved, some explanation had taken place between them. Much the unhappy woman wished her heart relieved from the heavy weight of guilt and anguish which oppressed it, and yet she dreaded the consequences of detection

detection or discovery ; she could confide her secret pangs to none ; there was no kind being to sooth or encourage good resolutions, and continued deception as it multiplied her transgressions, still increased the horrors of her gnawing conscience.

During the nominal Miss Barry's residence at Mrs. Fitzaubin's, she was daily at the castle, and often the words reached her lips to hint her suspicions to Lady Glenroy, that they had been deceived, and that in Miss Barry Ethelinde existed, but she knew her nature, trembled, and the sentence died unuttered on her tongue, until the day of such general confusion at the cottage, when perfectly convinced by a remarkable strawberry on her arm that she was the very child whom twenty years before she had delivered to the parish nurse. Happy mark ! stamped by the hand of nature to awake the dormant feelings of the hireling, and identify the person of the much wronged illustrious orphan.

The sudden effects of the discovery, and certainty of her conjectures, on Mrs. Harrop, have been already related: When the first dawn of reason broke upon her mind, she hastened to Lady Glenroy, and being informed her Ladyship was walking alone in the shrubbery, thither she hastened, and declared the deception that had been practised on them, and her satisfaction that their minds were relieved from the dreadful load of murder.

For a time Lady Glenroy felt as if transfixed to the spot, she doubted her very senses, and started as if from a fearful dream; her horrors were inconceivable; all the pains, the tortures of twenty years, availed her nothing, terminated in worse than nothing, in exposure, foul disgrace, and confusion to those expectations, for which she had involved herself in a labyrinth of guilt; her thoughts were tumultuous and wild, the most fierce and envenomed passions raged within her breast, and the sentiment which sprung in her bosom at
the

the moment of her brother's death received strength from the impending destruction which threatened her hopes, and soon reached its horrid climax, when forgetful of every principle of goodness, or humanity, she again determined on the death of the innocent orphan, and while Mrs. Harrop was repeating her thanks to heaven for preserving Ethelinde through so many dangers, she fiercely interrupted her

“Cease thy canting jargon,” cried she, “for by the tortures of my soul she still must perish!—Oh! for a trusty hand! —”

Mrs. Harrop shuddered; her health was declining, she trembled on the brink of eternity, felt she had a soul, and shrunk aghast from the murderer's office. Lady Glenroy now implored in vain; no entreaty, no bribe, could move her, and with difficulty she could be persuaded to even promise silence and concealment of the past and all she knew. In mutual disgust they then separated; Mrs.
Harrop

Harrop with all the anguish of conscious injustice in a mind awakened to a sense of wrong, and Lady Glenroy in all the horrors of dreaded detection.

She had traversed the shrubbery near an hour alone, revolving every method that could be suggested by a base mind to destroy her injured niece, but being totally unable to fix on any with perfect security to herself, she was yielding to a furious despair when a passing step among the withered leaves recalled her ideas, and inspired a fear, that her conference with Mrs. Harrop had been overheard: She had not long to consider, for a man suddenly stepped forth, and in a voice and manner which made her tremble, informed her he knew her secret, and that such were the circumstances of his own condition, that he was either ready to promote and execute her designs, or make his peace elsewhere by exposing them; the one which should best gratify his private vengeance and

secure

secure his wishes would have the preference, he therefore waited her pleasure.

It is almost unnecessary to say which proposition met her Ladyship's approbation, or that this convenient ready villain was Mr. Bothwel.

When Lord St. Clair, Ethelinde, and Lady Juliet, quitted the Priory Caverns, he had collected his scattered thoughts, and made the quickest dispatch to London to secure the money for which he had Lady St. Clair's order, but to his confusion and horror the bankers, on her Ladyship's decease, had received his Lordship's commands to pay no money whatever except to his signature. Her death, his disappointment, and the terrors of merited want and destruction, had the effects which might be expected, on a soul so vitiated by repeated crimes, and sunk in guilt, as his; the most relentless fury and revenge succeeded, and he vowed, with horrid imprecations on himself, to make St. Clair and

Ethelinde the victims of his disappointment, unless Lady St. Clair's orders were complied with and confirmed. In this determination he returned to Avondale, and supposing Lord St. Clair at the castle, in the disguise of a shipwrecked sailor gained admission at the park gates, and, fiend-like, was watching his opportunity of revenge, when the demons which presided over his fate conducted him to the spot, where again they lured him, in the forms of Ethelinde and vengeance, to the gulph of perdition.

Matters were soon adjusted between him and Lady Glenroy. It may be remembered, that Lord St. Clair was then absent, and a letter written in his name, by Bothwel, who could exactly imitate any hand, soon removed Lord Avondale also: Lady Glenroy then sent her servants to town, and, to avoid suspicion, left the castle herself also, but after her Lord's departure from his daughter's mansion, soon returned to prosecute her purposes. The castle was now almost deserted,
and

and every thing in readiness for the final blow, when Bothwel was informed by his emissary in town, that Lord St. Clair was set out for Avondale; this intelligence somewhat deranged their plans, as if his Lordship had not arrived already, he might be momentarily expected; but the heart of Bothwel now shrunk at nothing, and as he stood bound to murder, and quit his native land for ever, he resolved that nothing human should disappoint his purposes, and also to gratify one black passion more.

As he was informed by his accomplice without, of his Lordship's approach, they together lay in ambush to assassinate him; Lord St. Clair by an over-ruling power, was preserved for his future confusion and destruction; but the generous Avondale, in punishment to a guilty mother, was permitted to fall, the innocent victim of ruthless passion.

While these black designs were preparing at the castle, the wretched Mrs. Harrop was

struggling with the anguish of concealed injustice, and on her favorite grand child Margaret being taken suddenly ill, by the small-pox, she believed it the retributive visitation of offended heaven, and in the bitterness of her grief the long hidden secret burst from her breast, and with quivering lips she made a full and explicit confession to Basil and her daughter.

For a time they were speechless with astonishment and horror, but on recovering the power of recollection, they prevailed on her to promise a full disclosure of the affair in presence of the rector; to this she assented, but first insisted on acquainting Lady Glenroy with her intention to give her an opportunity, if she pleased, to save herself confusion by discovering it herself. On this errand Mrs. Harrop was bent when she encountered Ethelinde at the castle gates, but during the time Lady Glenroy was conducting Ethelinde to the north tower, some sudden thought struck her, that her Ladyship innured to the
idea

idea of murder might, unknowing that she had already revealed her secrets, privately remove her beyond the power of telling tales, by sending her to a great tribunal before she had sufficiently repented of her transgressions.

Impressed with this idea, which the awful silence that reigned around her strengthened, she would have retreated, but every avenue was closed, to leave the castle impracticable, and as her last chance of preservation, without waiting the return of Lady Glenroy, to hear her requests, swift as her feeble tottering limbs could support her, she hastened to the interior of the castle, and concealed herself in one of the winding passages leading to the northern tower, where the poor betrayed Ethelinde was confined. She remained several hours in this retreat, trembling with the terror of impending death, when she heard the voice of Lady Glenroy, in an adjacent chamber speaking to Bothwel. In answer to some questions he informed her, St. Clair was fallen, and without any risque or suspicion of

discovery by whom, and that he now hastened to execute her commands on Ethelinde, and added, that when the deed was done, should it be discovered, she might cast the whole blame upon him, as he would within a few hours after be beyond the reach of punishment.

There is little sincerity in guilty leagues: In the adjustment of matters between Bothwell and her Ladyship, he never mentioned Ethelinde having children, nor indeed were her wishes his motives; the most cruel and obdurate passions that can inflame the human mind urged him, and so as he possessed a competent sum to remove him from the apprehension of danger, and satisfy his own desires, he little cared whether success or failure, concealment or discovery attended the views of his employer, who intended as soon as Ethelinde was dead, to privately leave the castle, and pretend a perfect ignorance of every transaction, hoping, and indeed believing, that the whole would be attributed to the
known

known art and revenge of Bothwel's nature. The appearance of Mrs. Harrop occasioned some confusion at the moment, but in the rapid succession of thought she was never after once remembered.

Lady Glenroy and Bothwel had separated, the one to perpetrate the deed, and the other to await the signal of its being done, while Mrs Harrop was still shaking in her concealment, at length a foot approached, through terror she uttered a faint scream, and in a moment after beheld the figure of St. Clair glide swiftly past her. On gaining the ramparts the poor old warder told his Lordship all he knew, which was simply, that he believed Lady Glenroy had privately arrived at the castle, and was the person who ordered the gates to be closed; that Ethelinde was confined in the north tower, and from some words which had been dropped undesignedly by the servant of a Mr. Bothwel, he feared would never leave it alive, unless he could preserve her.

The heart of St. Clair sunk at the idea of Bothwel being near Ethelinde; all to him was dark, mysterious, and fearful, and guided alone by the honest old domestic, he rushed through the intricate passages of the castle to the north turret, and having wandered thro' the various chambers for a considerable time, at length from a dark recess the angel voice of his Ethelinde, and in a moment after the vile tongue of Bothwel struck his ear. He drew his sword, only a painted canvas obstructed his entrance, he pierced it, and in the moment so providential for his wife, raised the tapestry where she was lying beneath the savage grasp of Bothwel; and with ghastly horror appalled his blackened heart. He had every reason to believe him cold and weltering in his blood, and could only suppose his appearance a spirit.

Lady Glenroy had awaited the return of Bothwel impatiently in an apartment adjoining the grand hall of the castle, and when she expected to see him enter with the confirmation

tion of her wishes, beheld the corpse of her son laid before her, and the personages already described attending it. Human nature could not sustain the agony and horror which overwhelmed her guilty soul in that sad moment; she cast one despairing look upon her mangled darling, and in the accumulated anguish of that one bitter minute, felt the full punishment of her crimes strike her heart.

The confusion of noises soon reached the ear of Mrs. Harrop, she shook with various terrors and agitation, yet indulging a faint hope that deliverance was near, she staggered back to the hall, but the first glance of the surrounding objects induced her to believe St. Clair and Ethelinde had fallen, when supposing she would be impeached as a party actively concerned in that and other black transactions, she resigned herself as lost, and about to suffer an ignominious death. It was these terrifying ideas that reduced her to the pitiable condition described, and never did a despairing criminal receive a pardon with

more joyful transport, than she did the intelligence of their safety, and when she had made a full confession to the Rector of all she knew, and had assisted in, felt more peace and serenity than had been her portion for the lapse of twenty years; yet she experienced a trembling confusion not to be subdued, on receiving a command to appear before them, and but that Basil and her daughter consented, though with reluctance, to attend her in the dreaded interview, she had never collected fortitude to reach their presence. The Rector had been requested to attend, and she had scarcely uttered the few incoherent words already related, before he entered the apartment.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

"POOR woman!" said the gentle Ethelinde, in a pitying voice, when Mrs. Harrop fainted, "poor woman! what can so painfully disturb her mind? How she raves!" "An please you," cried the exulting Basil, there is enough to disturb any body, and if she does rave, raves very like the truth, for you are our true-born Lady, and, the Lord's blessing be upon you, never will be murdered again." Honest Basil's effusions were interrupted by the Rector, who coming forward, in a correct and concise manner explained the mystery, by declaring Mrs. Harrop's confession, and the means by which she had discovered Ethelinde to be the child of Lord Avon-

dale. He himself also adduced one proof more; his brother was private chaplain at the Foundling, had known Ethelinde from her admission, often admired her infant loveliness, and lamented that so brilliant an understanding had not higher improvement. He remembered her being taken from the charity, by the fortunate attachment of the Signora Martini, and while on a visit at the Rectory of Avondale, saw and knew her to be the same he had instructed so many years before.

While the Rector was relating these circumstances, Mrs. Barlowe entered the apartment, leading in the parish nurse, to whom the infant Ethelinde had been consigned. On Mrs. Harrop being pronounced in danger, Mrs. Barlowe indulged an idea, that when quivering on the brink of death she might be persuaded to unburthen her conscience of its load, and declare how she had disposed of the illustrious orphan.

With

With this hope she paid her a visit, which happening when admonition sinks deep, she disclosed the whole, adding, God, in taking her beloved Margaret, had punished her wickedness to Lord Avondale's child; yet she begged her to continue silent, until she could prevail on Lady Glenroy to be just herself, or remove far from her resentment, which was more terrible to her than any other earthly evil; this Mrs. Barlowe faithfully promised, yet her generous heart beat high with impatience and expectation to behold her still beloved Avondale's legal heir identified in the charming all amiable Ethelinde, she privately dispatched a messenger for the woman, demanding her immediate attendance, and at the same time assured her she had every advantage to hope from declaring the truth, and nothing to fear from detection, as the child was living and safe, and Mrs. Harrop's discovery productive of felicity to many.

Relieved by these assurances from the first terrors the appearance of the messenger had occasioned

occasioned, with every proper resolution and requisite proof she accompanied him, and arrived at Avondale. She had not finished reading a deposition, which previous to her quitting town she had made in presence of two magistrates, before Lord Glenroy, in the deepest confusion of reflected shame, and with faltering accents besought her to cease her detail, while he was present, as it overwhelmed a man with anguish and disgrace who never meant an injury to any human being, and who (so far from offering opposition to the just pretensions of his much wronged niece) would substantiate her every claim, and reinstate her with all convenient speed, and security in her hereditary honors and possessions; and, concluded his Lordship, while a tear of wounded reputation started in his eye, and the only grace I shall entreat from the present Heiress of Avondale is, to do my principles justice, and believe, I have ever been a stranger to the wrongs she has sustained, though a severe sufferer in their consequences; and may it ever be remembered by mankind, that
though

though our own rectitude of conduct may give us conscious peace, if those with whom we are related or connected yield to error, and tarnish reputation, in the involving shame we feel abashed, and cannot look but with the painful blushes of confusion.

His Lordship then bowing left the room, and the woman's deposition being concluded, the beautiful Ethelinde with the brightest suffusion of conscious happiness and well pleased amazement covering her cheeks, received the congratulations of her exulting friends and relatives, and was acknowledged as the undoubted heiress of the vast domains of Avondale.

In the unexpected acquisition of power, wealth, and dignities, Ethelinde felt little triumph, except in the sweet reflection that her beloved St. Clair could no longer be censured for having formed a mean imprudent alliance, but that his children would inherit from her, distinctions and possessions, this inspired a
sweet

sweet serenity indeed, and while her husband pressed her with rapture to his delighted bosom, whispering, in the softest accents, that she could be no dearer than when unfriended and unknown, and simply adorned by native loveliness and worth; she returned his endearments with ineffable complacency, and but for the increasing sorrow and alarming dejection of Lady Juliet, would have pronounced herself supremely happy.

When Lord Glenroy quitted the presence of Ethelinde, he repaired to his wife's chamber, and the physicians being there, he demanded their sincere opinion of the patient, and whether she could with safety be removed. Her fever, on reaching its crisis, instead of dissolution, which was momentarily expected, had terminated in that more pitiable state, gloomy distraction, and they declared it their opinion, that in a very few days she might be removed to any place the prudence and wishes of her friends suggested.

During

During this painful interval, Lord Glenroy lived secluded from every one whatever, and employed his saddened hours in settling all accounts between him and Ethelinde, and to the utmost of his ability refunding the immense sums which his Lady had squandered: This Lord St. Clair nobly declined accepting, saying, he already possessed more than answered all his wishes, and that he should ill deserve the privileges arising from Ethelinde's possessions, if the first use he made of them was to distress and inconvenience her uncle.

Ethelinde now devoted her whole time to the unhappy Juliet, and since she found it impossible to sooth or mitigate her sorrow, with all the tender zeal of friendship she shared it, and regardless of her own happiness and the smiling scenes which courted her acceptance, passed the dreary hours in weeping with her over the lifeless remains of the amiable Avondale; and though it was highly necessary to attend her uncle and Lord St. Clair to town, continued immoveable in her resolution

resolution to stay with Lady Juliet until Lord Avondale was deposited with his ancestors.

No one felt more for Lady Juliet than poor Mrs. Barlowe, her grief recalled to mind what she herself had once suffered, on an occasion somewhat similar, and she attended her anguished moments with the softest care imaginable; she also personally lamented the unfortunate Avondale, and nothing but beholding the child of her ever venerated Lord and Lady inherit their name and honors, could have proved a balm for the wound his death had inflicted on her heart.

One evening that a transient slumber had sunk the sorrows of Lady Juliet in momentary oblivion, Ethelinde questioned Mrs. Barlowe on the strange unaccountable noises and appearances seen and heard at the castle. "I am bewildered in conjecture," said she, "sometimes I believe it was the interposition of heaven directing me to the inheritance of my parents, and that supernatural agency is
not

not impossible—then think it was some secret combination of people and circumstances to promote a good purpose—but soon I dismiss both ideas, and pronounce it the vain fancies of a disturbed imagination.

Mrs. Barlowe appeared rather embarrassed, but at length replied, that all her conjectures were partly right, and yet partly wrong. “In one of your solitary visits to the Priory,” continued she, “I saw you in the ruined chapel, and was struck immoveable by your perfect resemblance to my late Lady; on the first glance I really believed you the unquiet spirit, but was soon undeceived by seeing the effects of fear legible on your pale countenance; the gallery you could not reach because of the broken steps, I ascended by a private staircase leading from a tomb behind. Once I also encountered you in the forest; the passing steps so frequently heard in the castle, and the different strains of music were produced by me.

“Often

Often in the dead of night when sunk in melancholy I would steal to the long desolated apartment of my mistress, and while I played on her favorite harp, gaze on the portraits of my Lord and her until I imagined myself with them in the regions of everlasting felicity. "You have certainly accounted for what I have heard," interrupted Ethelinde eagerly, "but the night I bewildered myself in the intricacies of the castle galleries I beheld—yes, too sure, I beheld the perfect forms of my dear gracious parents."

"You did indeed," replied Mrs. Barlowe, smiling, "and shall behold them again in the same state whenever you please. A short time before death deprived the world of their bright example these most perfect models were taken by an eminent artist. When Lady Glenroy quitted the castle her thoughts were too much engaged with other matters to think on them, and in my Lady's apartment I preserved them as the dearest treasures of my life; they were my morning joy, my evening contemplation,
and

and to gaze upon them and instruct my young Edmund were the only satisfactions of my cheerless blighted youth."

"It will be easily credited, that the presence, the very name of Lady Glenroy was painful to me; I therefore, on Lord Avondale's intimation that she was to re-visit the castle, requested his permission to spend a few months with a friend; my request was granted, and I was ready to depart, but previously resolved to secrete my beloved images; a vault under a Gothic temple in the castle garden I deemed a place of perfect concealment and security, there you heard and saw me, and to the deepening gloom of evening, which afforded you but an imperfect view, I was indebted for concealment. I was, with Edmund, engaged removing them, when your nocturnal visit interrupted us; on your first approach I stepped behind the arras, but had no time to conceal the figures, for you entered, shrieked, and fainted; during your insensibility, they were moved, but before Edmund could

could escape, your friends, alarmed by your cries, surrounded you."

"Lord Avondale had never seen my son, and his striking likeness to his father added to the gloom and confusion of the midnight hour, with the recollected legends of the castle being haunted, all conspired to impress his imagination with the idea that he was the spirit of his uncle, and as such, with deep solemnity he addressed him. Let my son be pardoned this duplicity, it was owing to me; he had often heard me declare a child was born in the last moments of Lady Avondale, and whether it was dead or living, still justice was unappeased, and he therefore took advantage of the time and situation to inform Lord Avondale, or at least create a desire of inquiry; the reflection lay heavy at his honest heart, he sunk in melancholy, and determined on a strict investigation, which intervening circumstances prevented, and his eyes were closed in death before the treachery was discovered."

"I

"I now hope," concluded Mrs. Barlowe, "I now hope, Madam, that every uneasy apprehension of Avondale being disturbed is removed, though, I doubt not, you will coincide with me in opinion, that it was the peculiar agency of heaven that directed circumstances to attend you, and impressed your mind with ideas that led to the general and most happy development of the mystery which obscured your illustrious birth."

Ethelinde listened with perfect attention to Mrs. Barlowe, and when she had finished, thanked her for the explanation of circumstances which had occasioned many an anxious thought; she then assured her that she should ever regard her as a friend, and consider the modest Edmund as the son of her father, and promote his interest and happiness with the affectionate zeal of a sister. "Restrain effusions I merit not," continued she, seeing the tears of gratitude tremble in her eyes as she was about to speak, "restrain them I beseech you, I should poorly perform

perform my duty, and ill deserve the enjoyment of my unexpected blessings, if I made them not a source of good to others, particularly one who has the claims of nature and merit on my heart and fortune."



CHAP. XI.



THE day appointed for the funeral rites of Lord Avondale now arrived, and the mournful ceremony was conducted with most magnificent solemnity, and as Lady Juliet, notwithstanding her enfeebled state, persisted in attending the beloved clay to the family vaults, she was accompanied by her brother, Ethelinde, Edmund, and every other sympathizing

thyzing friend. Her grief was unabated, yet calm as the silent scene she witnessed; her brilliant eyes no longer shone with hope, her every feature seemed moulded by the icy hand of death, her feeble form though it trembled beneath its weight of anguish, received a softened charm from sorrow, more interesting than the brightest bloom of health and happiness.

Without a tear, without almost a sigh, she beheld the last obsequies performed, but on the coffin being deposited in melancholy state by the side of his uncle's, she raised one mournful look to heaven, meekly pressed her cold hands upon her languid heart, and sinking silently on her knees, her head fell on the coffin and she fainted. Her brother gently raised her in his arms, and viewed her with an agony unutterable; her eyes were colourless, her cheeks and lips pale, and her lovely countenance had entirely lost its sweet expression; all her sorrows were forgotten; she respired not, for her heart was broke,

and her fair form reposed within the chilling arms of death.

The feelings of her friends can scarcely be imagined on discovering no spark of life remained; they hastened from the dwellings of the dead, and summoned every possible aid, but in vain, for she had paid the debt of nature and could feel no more. Long, very long disconsolation prevailed in the gentle affectionate bosom of Ethelinde; her brother mourned her with unaffected sorrow, and every friend paid tribute to the remembrance of her various virtues, and lamented her unhappy destiny.

Lord and Lady St. Clair, notwithstanding the urgency of their affairs, remained at the castle, and with all the honors becoming her birth and merit attended her lifeless remains to the melancholy mansion of him she had so much loved and for whom she died. Ethelinde still continued but too much inclined to melancholy and dejection, and but for the
soft

soft persuasions of her adoring St. Clair, and a tender wish to press her little darlings to her maternal bosom, she had much longer indulged gloomy remembrances in the Castle of Avondale.

At length, however, they departed for town, attended by the whole family of Mr. Fitzaubin, and on their arrival Lord St. Clair and Ethelinde with speechless pleasure beheld their children, blooming, beautiful, and healthy; their mother kissed them with transport, and in their innocent endearments almost forgot she had ever been unhappy:— Releasing them from her arms, she turned to the amiable woman to whom Lord Avondale had entrusted them, and who, indeed, had acted a mother's part, and with gratitude and goodness beaming in her eyes, entreated she would direct her how to offer some testimony of the sense she entertained of her kindness.

“In your approbation, Madam,” returned she, “I am both gratified and rewarded, and felt too much satisfaction in the innocent endearing caresses of the charming children, to merit any thanks for my care ; if my love is deserving any recompense, permit me to hope I shall receive it in sometimes being allowed to see and embrace them.”

This happy assemblage of persons now set out for the house of Lord St. Clair, in Grosvenor-Square, where a sumptuous entertainment awaited them. Lord Glenroy arrived in town a few days after Ethelinde, and in all the necessary forms of law invested her with her father's honors and possessions ; she wished to be in friendship with him, and notwithstanding all her wrongs, lamented the melancholy derangement of her aunt's intellects, but Lord Glenroy though rather deficient in sense, had yet sensibility ; remembrance shocked him, and he shrunk in confusion from her mild affectionate eye, and shunned her presence,

presence, though he revered her virtues and loved her sweetness of manners.

The amiable Signora and Mr. Menville resided in the house of Lord St. Clair; she could not quit the beloved child of her adoption, nor could he the new discovered daughter of his darling sister; nature strengthened the sentiment in his bosom sympathy had first inspired, and the merit of the charming object secured his whole regard. Lord St. Clair revered them both as his parents, and loved them as his friends, and his liberality being ample as diffusive, his days were one continued scene of beneficence and happiness. Ethelinde had given a genteel independence to her beloved Mrs. Fitzaubin, and Lord St. Clair had taken the fortunes of the gentle Edmund and Nugent under his care; but before either or any entered on the active scene of life, the whole party were invited to pass the summer in the delightful retirement of Arundle Abbey.

It was now the enlivening month of May, and the balmy breezes of a charming spring were unfolding the vernal beauties of vegetative nature, when, one morning, about a week before their departure, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzaubin and Marcella requested Ethelinde's company to an exhibition. They had fauntered about the rooms near two hours, and were descending the stairs to return home, when a miserable object laying across the door at once attracted their notice and excited their compassion; her habiliments were so very wretched and mean, that with difficulty they distinguished her of the female race, and her emaciated frame apparently shivered in the cold agony of death. She raised her head on their approach, and opened her eyes, but instantly closing them, groaned as if the parting pangs of nature were upon her. With pity for her sufferings sprung another sentiment—the wish to alleviate them—and with this intention they drew nearer and addressed her.

“Poor

"Poor woman!" said Ethelinde, gazing pityingly on her, "poor woman, say, how can your situation be softened, or where would you be removed?" On hearing a voice, she started, looked sadly up, and in feeble accents replied, "only to my grave—I have no father—no friend—no home—only to my grave."

Ethelinde turned to request Mr. Fitzaubin to call her servants, but to her astonishment and grief beheld him pale and trembling, leaning against the wall for support, and his sister Marcella in a condition little better; she would have requested an explanation from Mrs. Fitzaubin, but the emotion of her husband and sister rendered her speechless—Several people were now assembled round them, every one desirous to learn the cause of what they beheld, and Ethelinde as careful to conceal it, and shun observation; fortunately at that instant one of her footmen appeared, when having ordered the coach to draw up, and seen her agitated friends attend-

ed to it, judging there was something extraordinary in the poor woman's history, and that it interested or concerned those so high in her regard, she commanded her to be placed in a hackney coach, and conducted to Grosvenor-Square.

They had nearly reached home, and still Mr. Fitzaubin continued silent and distressed, but Marcella relieved by a flood of tears, exclaimed, "the poor lost Matilda!" the whole now burst upon the mind of Ethelinde, and she remained reflecting how often she had seen guilt receive its retribution even upon earth, until the carriage stooped. In a few minutes after she saw the hackney coach arrive, when the poor pitiable object was supported to a room which she had ordered for her reception. It was indeed the fallen Matilda Fitzaubin, and guilty as the virtuous Ethelinde knew her, she yet commiserated the horrors of her present condition, and ordered every comfort and necessary attendance her dying state required.

In

In a few hours Mr. Fitzaubin became sufficiently composed to converse on the subject; the form, and once beautiful features of his unhappy cousin were totally unremembered, but her voice, except being more feeble, was unaltered, and striking his ear, occasioned the painful agitation described.

Towards evening the wretched Matilda implored to see the lady whose generous compassion had relieved, and enabled her to breathe out a weary existence free from the cruel insults of an unfeeling rabble. Ethelinde, though sensible her feelings would be severely shocked, could not deny her dying request, but with compassion glowing in her gentle heart she was hastening to the sufferer's presence, when stopped by Mr. Fitzaubin.

"Spare your sensibility a pang, my amiable Lady St. Clair," said he, "spare it I beseech you, and approach not even the dying bed of one so sunk, so lost in guilt and infamy as her condition sadly proclaims her to be ;

already has compassion honored her too much by deigning her the shelter of this roof; suffer me then to remove her to my humbler home, and —” “Close this subject if you would not offend me,” interrupted Ethelinde, with seriousness, “not approach her bed, my dear Sir, kind heaven! shall thine all perfect angels, bearing grace and mercy, vouchsafe attendance on a dying guilty bed, when called on, and shall impure mortality refuse the poor, poor comfort it can grant, when humbly asked by an expiring being? No, no, I feel the duty of humanity, and will perform it.”

Mr. Fitzaubin durst remonstrate no more, and Ethelinde attended by Mr. Menville, repaired to the chamber of the dying Matilda. She undrew the curtains, and, in a pitying voice, hoped she was somewhat easier: Her face was shaded with a ghastly hue, her eyes were fixed, she shook in the tremor of death, and was fast approaching the gloomy precincts of the grave, yet still she could articulate, and to Ethelinde's question replied, in
faint

aint accents, "As I wish—as I deserve—hastening to an early and unpitied fate—yet, ere the dust for ever hides me, let me bless your mercy and do an act of justice—'tis only virtue, such as your's must be, that could vouchsafe compassion to one so lost to goodness as the undone Matilda—I have sinned—I have expiated—I wronged my cousin, and he lives to see me low as ruin and dishonor can reduce me; while he starts with horror from my guilt, let him deign its punishment some pity, and these papers," taking a parcel from her bosom, "and these papers, delivered to my declining broken hearted parent, will reward him; and when I am in the grave, and all my crimes forgotten by the world, let Henry Fitzaubin remember, that an unbounded passion for him first caused transgression."

Here she sunk exhausted on her pillow, but soon recovering, joined Mr. Menville in prayer, with silent fervor, and having, in dying accents, again blessed Ethelinde, she closed her eyes, and with a deep sigh sunk in

the heavy slumber of death. Ethelinde rather felt a saddened pleasure that she was so soon released from her sufferings, and gave orders for a decent yet private funeral, but at the request of Mrs. Fitzaubin deferred it until her papers were examined, lest she should have expressed a wish for her father to behold her poor remains. Ethelinde immediately produced the packet, which contained, on different pieces of paper, the following particulars; on the cover were these words.

“To the benevolent stranger whose compassionating charity may repose me in a decent grave—Oh! kindly being, whoever thou art, vouchsafe to accept the blessing of a dying wretch, and in remembrance of him who suffered for the lost, deliver the enclosed papers to an unhappy father. Drop a tear of pity on my fate, for though polluted and disgusting now, I once was fair, innocent, and beloved; was nursed in the bosom of affection, and cherished in the heart of a parent; bloomed in the pride of loveliness and worth, and triumphed

trampled in reputation, till passion, cruel passion took possession of my soul, and whirled me down the precipice of guilt and ruin—but now my hours are few, the bitterness of fate is nearly over, the last pangs now rend my suffering frame, and soon the fallen Matilda will be—as if she had never been.

Farewell,

MATILDA.



CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

TO FRANCIS FITZAUBIN, ESQ.

B——Street, Grosvenor-Square.

START not, Oh! first, Oh! best, and most deceived of parents—start not in horror from the last lines you can ever view from the polluted hand of your forlorn and wretched Matilda. — Start not, the hand lies mouldering in the dust, and the heart that dictated them hath ceased to palpitate for ever.

Why,

Why, Oh! my father, did you give me being?—Was it to sink you to the grave with shame and sorrow?—Why did you cherish my smiling infancy?—Was it to crush each happy expectation?—Why delight in my blooming youth, was it to blight your hopes and curse you with disgrace?—Ah! too sure, too sure—yet all is now avenged—my measure filled; as my transgressions multiplied my sufferings increased, and now they run over into the boundless ocean of a dread eternity.

Yet, in these anguished hours, when passion drops its fascinating mask, and gives a prospect of a future state, let me restore a wronged deserving nephew to your favor; he will be the comfort of your declining age, will soothe the langour of sorrowing regret, and even cheer the trembling bed of death—will cheer that bed my crimes have planted with the sharpened thorns of shame and disappointment—for, Oh! he is the fair reverse of your most false Matilda. I knew him wedded to the

the virtuous Jessy, when I brought him to your house ; he practised no deception, but I enjoined him silence, and suppressed the circumstance to promote my secret purposes.

My passion for him was violent and unconquerable, yet neither pure nor delicate ; long, very long he sustained my disgusting persecutions, and mildly, affectionately remonstrated with me on my indiscretion, but I was born to shame and devoted to destruction. I urged him, prayed him to forsake his wife, and fly with me ; he started with horror at the vile proposal—I saw him shrink from my indelicate caresses, and in that moment meditated,—determined on his ruin.

To you, Oh ! unsuspecting parent, I flew, and with well affected resentment and grief declared his union with Jessy, and accused him of having insulted me with an illicit passion, and a proposal to elope. Your honest nature shuddered at such baseness—you folded the dissembler

dissembler with fondness to your bosom, and spurned the innocent sufferer with indignation from your mansion. My revenge was gratified, yet still internal torture gnawed my heart, and in a fit of desperation, at your pressing desire, I gave my hand to your ill-fated friend. You then went to Ireland, and became a stranger to my conduct.

Oh! had I not been doomed to ruin and to wretchedness, with that good man I might have lived in peaceful joy, and died in innocence, for he was kind, gentle, and humane; smiled on my follies, and forgave my faults, until they swelled beyond a husband's patience.

A wretched female domestic, who had been (alas! how fatal) the confidant of my passion for Fitzaubin, with all her ignorance had art to plan my destruction; my visible indifference, indeed disgust, towards my husband, gave encouragement to the pretensions
of

of every libertine that fluttered round me, and one more designing than the rest, whom I unfortunately pleased, bribed this base attendant to his interest.

She pretended to me, having met Fitz-aubin, and that he avowed unconquerable love; my heart beat with joy at the welcome intelligence, which was confirmed in the evening by a letter, written in characters so like to his that the nicest observer might have been deceived; my undoer had copied the hand writing from a letter my maid stole from my cabinet for the purpose.

The words were impassioned, he accused his wife of infidelity, expressed regret for having rejected my affection, and concluded with making a guilty assignation for the next evening, at a noted house of pleasure. I had no guardian angel, my virtue was never watched, but let loose with wild tumultuous passions, sunk in the whirl of ruin, and left not

a wreck of innocence behind. I was but too punctual to the black appointment; at the gates of the polluted mansion I was welcomed by the assumed Fitzaubin; it was agreed we should both be masked, I knew him not, nor suspected deception—He passionately seized my hands, softly whispered, “Beauteous Matilda, speak not, your husband is near.”

I had a fear of shame though none of guilt, remained silent, and rejoiced in our fancied security—we retired—Oh! my father, let the scene that followed these dishonored moments plead my pardon in your forgiving heart, and atone where I am going.

A loud noise soon alarmed us, I started from his guilty arms, shrieked, the betrayer drew his sword, as the room-door burst open and my husband appeared.

There had been a dispute that morning between the villain that had deceived me and his

his valet; indifferent of my reputation, he had entrusted him with the secret of our interview, and in the fury of resentment for being discharged, he discovered his master's intrigue with me to my husband, who reaching the house insisted on admission, and half frantic from a variety of passions, rushed through every apartment until he found us.

Anguish, rage, and vengeance sat upon his pallid brow, he dragged me with violence from the sofa on which I reclined, if possible to shield the supposed Fitzaubin from his fury; but weak was my defence—he ordered him to draw—but he shrunk back from the command, and in the tremor of fear, and meanness of falsehood, threw the whole blame of the guilty assignation on me, a poor, helpless, undone woman.

methought the voice was much unlike the gentle Henry's—but it might be the effects of terror—but Henry was brave, disdained to
shrink

shrink from danger, far less to save himself, criminate a weak defenceless female ; — but guilt might have inspired cowardice and unnerved his arm.

These ideas were the rapid succession of a moment—I had no longer time to think before I beheld, with agony beheld, my husband's sword buried deep in his bosom—he fell—I shrieked, “my Henry!” but his mask dropped off, and in his distorted features I viewed a vile betrayer.

Eternal God!—I was not quite abandoned, what then were the complicated horrors of that agonized moment!—All the passions that can rend the human-mind raged within me, and turned my bosom to a chaos of torturing distraction ; I gazed wild and fearfully around, and in a sudden transport of anguished fury I seized the sword yet reeking with the villain's blood, and had plunged it in my heart, but that my wronged unhappy husband interposed.

“Stay



“Stay thy fatal hand, my poor undone Matilda,” said he, with looks and voice more pitying than resentful, “stay a little longer—force not thy trembling spirit on eternal reprobation—Poor lost Matilda! — Ruined woman!—yet more fair than false, I never more will wound thee with reproach—disdained, forsaken, and dishonored, by the heart I worshipped, and believed most perfect—whither can I turn but to the early grave your fatal passions have prepared me. Still I adore—forgive—and pity you—yet cannot endure—cannot forget—cannot live—and so must die, to never more behold your loved, your lovely ruined form:—Farewell, Matilda, seek your parent and repent, and heaven be merciful to us both! — Again farewell——farewell—” and at each repeated adieu he struck the sword into his own generous dishonored bosom, and fell dying on the floor.

The room soon filled—the scene was horrible.—They would have seized me as a murderer,

dress, but my husband raising his dying eyes, extended his feeble arms, and, while able, shielded me from their violence and resentment; but, alas! his life flowed out apace, he could no longer hold me, but breathing one deep excruciating groan, and gasping, "she is innocent," his languid head sunk on my false betraying bosom, and he expired.

I was detained—imprisoned—and sunk in the gloom of despairing horror, little cared what destiny awaited my remaining days. Had the character of Sir William Brandon, the name of my vile seducer, been even respectable, instead of being universally hated and despised, the death and evidence of my wronged and unoffending husband insured my safety.

After a summary trial I was acquitted and discharged, and it was generally believed my husband and Sir William had destroyed each other on my account.

I have been informed, Oh! most 'deceived of parents, that when these fatal circumstances reached your ears, reason forsook her seat, and an anguished melancholy brought you to the gates of death—Oh! art thou yet existing, my poor father—or hath thy wretched daughter also murdered thee?——Oh!—my brain—my brain!——

I quitted the prison comfortless and abandoned, in these hours of agony, want, and despair, whither, Oh! whither could I turn me? — Crushed beneath my heavy load of guilt and sorrow, with slow lingering steps I wandered to a father's hospitable door—Alas! alas! the gates were closed, the mansion desolate, and by a passing stranger, to whom my altered figure was unknown, I was informed, my poor old father was confined in melancholy madness.

In happy hours I never made a friend, in forrowing moments never knew commiseration

ration—my home, through shame, I had abjured—my husband's family held me in abhorrence—whither then could lost Matilda fly for shelter or repose? I thought my cup was full, but, alas! I had still an embittered pang to feel—I had to feel my guilt in my punishment—I was—the once pure and innocent Matilda was——Oh! oblivion, drop thy darkening curtain, and veil the horror from a father's eye—I was——no more—an hospital received me—I was soon freed from pollution, but a deep decline made rapid advances on my enfeebled constitution, and my shattered frame fast yielded to the cold embrace of death.

While a rag remained, one of those nightly receptacles, the usual haunt of misfortune and impurity, sheltered me from the midnight storm; that wretched fund exhausted, the street, or any ruined building, became my only refuge——My father—Oh! my father—dear victim of thy daughter's fatal passions, can,

Oh! can her sufferings expiate?—Can they plead for thy poor child within thy kindly bosom?—Yes—yes—but never can the gracious founts of pity, or of pardon, from a parent's lips, cheer my sad fainting spirits, for even now I shiver in the latest tremors of enduring nature, and soon an earthy bed will hide me and my crimes for ever.

Vouchsafe, my father, Oh! vouchsafe to think you see your once loved child, your cherished Matilda, driven by the howling wind, and drenched in the heavy rain—think you behold her resting her head, so oft' reposed upon your honored bosom, on some cold flinty stone, or more unwholesome humid earth, wearing the weary sleepless night away in solitary anguish, and only rising to again endure the oppression, insult, and unfeeling scorn, which ever came with the unwelcome light of morning.

Oh! harsh uncharitable world, you know not the extent of my transgressions, why then
refuse

refuse compassion to a dying wanderer, shivering on the grave. Why not allow her some dark corner to resign her broken spirit. Blessed father! yet bethink thee of my many sorrows, and over the low parish grave, which must inclose me, graciously pronounce my pardon. My eyes are dim—my hands grow weak—and my poor heart hath almost ceased to beat —— Oh! mighty heaven, pity and receive a wretched penitent, now trembling in the varied pangs of pain, remorse, and death.

Oh! be the evening of my father's life serene! may the unerring Henry be his future support, and all misfortune and remembrance of the lost Matilda be buried in her lowly grave. — Dear venerated parent, fare thee well, my eyes no longer view the traces of my pen—recollection fails—the hand of death is on me, and I can only add farewell for ever.

MATILDA ———.

CHAP. XIII.

ETHELINDE and her friends, and indeed the whole of the Fitzaubin family, dropped the tears of commiseration to the memory and hapless destiny of the dead Matilda, and Lord St. Clair, at the request of her cousin, set out for the residence of the unhappy father.

He had, on the first intelligence of his darling's misconduct, been seized with an alarming delirium, which gradually yielded to a deep melancholy; but at the period of Lord St.

St. Clair's visit, he was sufficiently restored to reason to make the strictest inquiry for his fallen Matilda—but all was in vain—for from the hour of his derangement until the moment he was informed by Lord St. Clair of her death, he had heard nothing of her.

In melancholy silence and the bitter tears of paternal regret streaming down his pale aged cheeks, he attended his Lordship to Grosvenor-Square, and with more composure than could have been expected, entered the apartment where lay in decent neatness the lifeless remains of his beloved daughter—what a scene for the poor old eyes of a tender parent! He had left her blooming, good, and happy—he found her dead, the poor lost victim of despair and guilt.

His tears fell upon her cold lifeless face, a face which still retained the pale shadow of its former beauty, and while hanging in indescribable agony over her, he perused the papers, written in her latest hours.

Cruel remembrance crowded on his mind; nature could not sustain such feelings, and he sunk almost insensible in the arms of his attending nephew; he however soon recovered, and having finished reading, clasp'd the lifeless form to his bosom, exclaiming, "Oh! my poor ruined girl!—my penitent Matilda!—my child!—my child! would I had died, and never seen this hour!—Yet, still more blessed to these old unhappy eyes, than to know thee suffering or abandoned. — Sweet spirit of my child! Oh!—if thou canst behold thy parent's heart—which prays thee pity—peace and pardon—from thy God."

Here his nephew, from a regard to his health, and a fear that his emotions might too much affect his weakened spirits, kindly yet respectfully interrupted his tender grief, and entreated he would retire and accept the gentle care and attendance of a niece, who would, if he vouchsafed to honor her with
notice,

notice, ever wait upon him with the love and duty of a tender daughter.

The old man was overcome with variety of emotions, he could not reply, but softly pressing the hands of his nephew, suffered himself to be led to the presence of Mrs. Fitzaubin and Marcella. Their soothing attentions soon composed him sufficiently to give the necessary orders respecting the corpse of his unfortunate Matilda, which in a few days after was attended with equal privacy and propriety, by her cousin Henry, to the vaults of the Fitzaubin family.



CHAP. XIV.



CONCLUSION.

THOUGH we have very amply illustrated the various and rather uncommon events which for a long lapse of time attended the personages principally concerned in this history, it may not be either unnecessary or unsatisfactory to relate some few succeeding circumstances of their very interesting lives and characters.

Lord St. Clair and his all excellent Ethelinde, experienced the most undisturbed felicity, to a very happy and revered old age; they

they were distinguished by every exalted virtue, the brightest ornaments of conjugal fidelity, and the most amiable examples of diffusive beneficence. They had the blissful satisfaction to behold a numerous family of children, the fair inheritors of their own worth and goodness; the pride and pleasure of their lives, and the delight of an admiring world, and until the latest ages of time the poor and friendless will have reason to bless the liberality and kindness of the generous Lord St. Clair, and the illustrious Heiress of Avondale.

The good Mr. Menville, for the blessing of an extensive diocese, more from the excellence of his principles and character than even the interest of his powerful relatives, was ordained a dignitary of the church. He had long admired the many accomplishments, and loved the virtues of the amiable Signora, and in grateful remembrance of her care of his charming niece, and perhaps still more to gratify a soft inclination, he united his fate
with

with hers; she proved the attentive friend, the pleasing companion, and good wife; and never did the worthy prelate feel the regret of a moment for having entrusted his happiness to her gentle care; they lived a life of peace, of innocence, and benevolence, and in contemplating the felicity of their darling Ethelinde, and her flourishing family, experienced the most serene and delightful pleasure.

The uncle of Mr. Fitzaubin lived several years after the decease of his ill-fated daughter, and in the soothing cares and dutiful attentions of Mrs. Fitzaubin and Marcella, felt a degree of quiet and contentment far beyond his expectations; they were the comfort and pleasure of his declining years,

"They nursed the cradle of reposing age,"

and at his death he rewarded their duty by bequeathing his immense possessions equally between them.

Henry

Henry Fitzaubin and his charming Jessy, were among the happiest of human beings; he had long abjured the fatal errors of impious passion, and unthinking youth, and by imitating the gentle worth of his wife, merited that portion of happiness she conferred upon him, while she, in contrasting her condition with former sorrows, and the consequences of indiscretions, felt every blessing receive an added zest.

The amiable Marcella and her adoring Nugent enjoyed a portion of felicity which could only be surpassed by their virtues; they were exemplary in all the duties of life, and a constant source of pleasure to their friends and relatives.

The good Mrs. Barlowe resided entirely with Ethelinde, and had the satisfaction to behold her modest Edmund carested as a child of the illustrious house, and loved as a brother by St. Clair and Ethelinde; he continued to rise in the church, and while yet young,

young, married into a respectable and opulent family; his little ones were the delight of his mother's hours, and never was her mind so tranquil and contented as when surrounded by them, and the children of Ethelinde.

Lady Glenroy survived several years in all the horrors of despairing madness; her Lord lived in melancholy seclusion, anxious to escape from the malignant comments of an indiscriminating world, that too often censure in one, perfectly blameless, the guilty errors of another, and so bitter is the consciousness of reflected shame, that it was a considerable time before the different branches of the family would appear in public, and when they did, it was with their charming cousin, which assuredly was the only method to silence the cruel tongue of malign reproach.

Old Mrs. Harrop very soon followed her favorite Margaret to the grave; the long pent up horrors of accusing conscience had undermined her constitution, and though her
last

last moments were rendered peaceful by the safety of Ethelinde, she sunk, a pitiable instance of divine retribution to an unlamented grave.

Honest Basil Carr, and his good natured Agnes were indisputably the happiest tenants on the domains of Avondale; they were ever honored with the kindness and patronage of Lord St. Clair and Ethelinde; their bounty enriched them, their privileges gave them consequence, and their own united application and industry rendered them in time the most opulent family of their condition in the whole county.

Ethelinde founded a school where her mother's had stood, and became its zealous patroness, and the blessing of the surrounding neighbourhood.

To the unaffected joy and indeed advantage of a numerous vassalage, Lord St. Clair and Ethelinde spent a considerable part of

every summer at the Castle of Avondale. They were the parents and benefactors of their dependants and tenants; no complaint was there disregarded, nor any abuse unredressed; and it is only to be wished that every Nobleman and Gentleman would condescend, like Lord St. Clair and Ethelinde to inspect their own accounts, and enter the Hamlets of the industrious poor, when by listening to their grievances and oppressions, they might give the humble beings plenty and happiness, and prevent them becoming victims to the various impositions practised by unfeeling avaricious stewards.

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FINIS.

